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THE MARTYRS OF CARTHAGE.

CHAPTER I.

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, what doeth it?

I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.—*Ecclesiastes* ii. 1-3.

SEPTIMIUS returned to Carthage, and he related to Marcus and his father all that had passed in his interviews with Vivia. The anger of Fabius was greatly roused against his daughter-in-law, as he listened to the relation of her unconquerable firmness, and pious resolve to endure to the uttermost all that should befall her for the sake of Christ. Fabius was an apostate himself; and he hated, with a bitter

hatred, every Christian who withstood temptations, before one of the least of which he had himself fallen. But the heart of Marcus bled and quivered as the young soldier told him of his lovely wife's sufferings, and of her constant love and devotion to him, who was now her cruel oppressor. And when Septimius owned the effort he had made to induce her to leave her place of banishment, and seek an abode of more comfort and companionship, Marcus took his friend's hand, and pressed it gratefully, but he did not trust himself to express his feelings.

Nevertheless, to the surprise and regret of Septimius, he neither then, nor afterwards, when they walked to his home together, showed the least disposition to relent towards his wife, or to try the effect of his own personal persuasions, to which the young Roman sought to urge him, in the secret hope that the sight of her patient sorrow, and the expression of her unchanged and unchangeable affection would at once disarm his wrath, and lead to a perfect reconciliation. But Marcus was obdurate; and the only concession that his friend could obtain was a promise that he would defer the process of divorce until his return from his mission to

the capital, thus giving Vivia a still further period of probation, and leaving her a hope of restoration to his love and favour, if that period was employed in accordance with his wishes, and resulted in her acceptance of the terms which she had now so decidedly rejected.

Of this delay in her legal separation from her husband, Septimius was permitted to inform her by a letter to be sent by Rufus. But Marcus exacted from him a solemn promise to visit her place of abode no more himself, nor to inform any one where she resided. A faint hope still lingered in his heart, that time and solitude would wear out her patience; and the more complete and irksome her solitude, the more probable, he thought, would be such a happy result. In the meantime he declared his intention of immediately commencing his preparations for his voyage, the vessel which was to bear him to Italy being already in the port, and only waiting his decision whether he or another was to be entrusted with the dispatches, and the confidential communications of the Proconsul.

He left Septimius, and repaired to the palace of Saturninus to inform him of his readiness to

depart in a few days; and his friend hastened to prepare a strong but respectful letter to Vivia, telling her of her husband's last offer, and earnestly entreating her to reflect upon it well, and not again to reject it. This letter he bribed Rufus to convey to her the following day, and provided him with a fleet horse of his own for the purpose.

Vivia read the letter, with gratitude towards Septimius, and with a feeling of happiness that at least for some months longer she might know that she was united to Marcus, as his lawful wife. But that was all. She knew the blow must come; and she only prayed for grace to bear it when it became inevitable.

Three days sufficed to complete the preparations of Marcus; and then, attended by a suitable suite of inferior officers and servants, he set sail in a goodly vessel from the port of Carthage; and, with a favourable wind, he soon reached Ostia, and sailed up the Tiber from thence to Rome. He was well and honourably received by the Emperor, for Severus had already distinguished him among the officers who served with him in the East; and the embassy on which he was sent by the Proconsul of

Africa was both important and confidential. It chiefly related to the progress of Christianity in that portion of the Roman dominions, and the course which Saturninus thought it most desirable to pursue in order to put a stop to the rapid and widely-extending dissemination of the pestilent heresy. The Proconsul ventured strongly to advise that the vigorous and cruel measures which had been generally adopted by the civil magistrates, since the promulgation of the edict of Severus, should for a time be suspended, as only tending to the destruction of many of the most valuable citizens and subjects of the empire, without putting any corresponding check to the evil so much dreaded. He therefore implored his Imperial master to try more lenient methods, and to command a cessation of all active persecution, and ostensible punishment of the crime of being followers of the Nazarene; while at the same time he suggested that a decided favour and preference should be shown towards the staunch adherents of Paganism, and every encouragement offered to those among the heretics who would renounce their errors, and return to the faith of their forefathers. Such a system he hoped

confidently would tend far more to stay the progress of the evil doctrines than confiscation, and banishment, and the stake. He knew by painful experience that these severe penalties were altogether inefficient towards producing either silence or recantation on the part of the Christians; who even seemed, in many instances, to court martyrdom, and to rush madly on their impending fate.

Severus respected the judgment of Saturninus, and he knew him to be a faithful and devoted servant of the empire; he therefore considered his arguments with attention, and listened to all that Marcus was instructed to inform him of by word of mouth, in corroboration of those arguments. The result was, the promulgation of a decree for a temporary suspension of all punishment to those who quietly, and inoffensively to others, practised the observances, and held the doctrines of Christianity. This clemency was extended to all the Christian subjects of the empire, as the decree further set forth, in the hope that it would bring them to a better mind, and put a stop to those unlawful and treasonable projects of which they were suspected. And to

encourage them yet more, the Emperor caused it to be expressed that he had on many occasions observed the conduct of the disciples of the Nazarene, and had found reason to commend their activity and fidelity as citizens, soldiers, and servants, and their zeal in the fulfilment of their duties in every department of public life; and therefore it had been with pain that he had felt himself compelled to the adoption of severe modes of chastisement to suppress their erroneous faith and practice with regard to religion. He now, he declared, gladly proclaimed his intention to try, for a time, gentle measures; and he expressed an ardent hope that his clemency would be met by a corresponding spirit of obedience to the laws, and dutiful submission to his wishes.*

* The Emperor Alexander Severus is known to have passed a high eulogy on the manners and conduct of the Christians. Being much struck by the excellence of their lives, and the rectitude with which they discharged every public and social duty, he inquired into the principles that regulated their conduct. He was informed that the grand fundamental rule of their lives, and one which they had received from their Founder, was this:—"Never to do to others what they would not wish to have done to themselves;" and he was so impressed with the moral beauty, and practical worth, of this precept, that he ordered it to be proclaimed aloud by a herald

This comparatively merciful edict, which was published throughout the empire, was received with joy and gratitude by the Christians. But as the storm of persecution had not terrified them from their faith, or forced them to relinquish their hold on the "Rock of their salvation," so neither did the sunshine of prosperity induce them to be negligent of their duty, or to give way to any conformity to the sinful practices of the heathen among whom they dwelt. Quietly and unobtrusively they "kept their faith;" but they *did keep it.* Gratefully they enjoyed repose, while it was their Master's good pleasure to accord them them that blessing; but they held themselves prepared for active exertion, for suffering, yea, even for death, whenever He should see fit to try them again with dark days of affliction.

The respite from fear and suffering which was accorded to the Christians by this temporary change in the policy of the Emperor, was of very brief duration; for Rome was, at

at all public executions; and even caused it to be inscribed on the walls of his palace, and on all public buildings, in order that in every street, and on every occasion, his subjects might not be without so excellent a rule by which to regulate their social manners.—"Life of Alexander Severus."

this period, in an unusual state of excitement, owing to the expected festivities that were to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the accession of Severus to the Imperial throne. The marriage of his eldest son, Caracalla, to Fulvia, the daughter of his favourite, Plautianus, was also to be solemnized at the same time; and, to add to the splendour and gaiety that were so eagerly anticipated by the Roman people, the Emperor declared his intention of uniting the celebration of his Eastern victories with that of the other auspicious events already mentioned. At all times of public rejoicing the disciples of Christ were made the objects of the insults and cruel injuries of the populace; and they were not exempt from this, their common lot, on the present occasion, notwithstanding the more merciful intentions of the Emperor. But Severus really cared little for the sufferings of his Christian subjects, so long as they did not tend to the positive injury of the empire; and he was too much occupied with his projects of ambition, and with his domestic cares and anxieties, to give any heed to the calamities that befel a few insignificant and despised heretics. His

time and attention were likewise considerably engaged by literary pursuits, to which he was much attached; and he not only gave liberal encouragement to men of talent and learning, but he also found leisure, amid his various public occupations, to compile a history of his own times. He was an enemy to the luxurious and expensive mode of living so common among the wealthy Romans of that period, and he set his courtiers an example of temperance in diet, and moderation in dress and equipage, that it would have been well if they had followed.

Severus was, in many respects, a great and a distinguished Emperor, and he did much for the glory and stability of the Empire; but cruelty and ambition were his besetting sins; and his conduct towards his vanquished rivals, Albinus and Niger, has left a stain on his memory, that all his conquests, and all his talents, can never wipe out. His powerful abilities, and the strength of his natural character, did not, however, prevent his falling into the common error of tyrants, and being himself subject to the will and influence of a favourite. And, as is also but too common,

the favourite of Septimius Severus was unworthy of the confidence of his master, and of the power and authority that were delegated to him.

During the time that Severus was engaged with his Eastern campaign, Plautianus was left to direct the public affairs at Rome. As he was likewise entrusted with the command of the Prætorian guards, which important body of troops had been lately re-established on a new footing by the Emperor, he possessed unbounded power and influence in the city. His influence was not always employed for the interests of his too-confiding master, for the ambition of the Præfect led him even to entertain thoughts of treason, and to devise schemes for aspiring to the throne himself. Before the return of Severus from Egypt, Plautianus had formed a conspiracy against him; but he did not attempt to put his treacherous plans into execution until the period of which we are speaking. He still wore the mask of fidelity and devotion, while treason lurked in his breast; and he hastened to confirm his power by urging on the celebration of the marriage of his daughter, Fulvia,

with the heir to the throne, while at the same time he was meditating the destruction of both Caracalla and Severus; and looking forward to the approaching scenes of festivity and joy, as likely to afford him a fitting opportunity for the perpetration of his vile schemes.

For this purpose he employed every means in his power to attach to his person and his interests, the flower of the Roman nobility, many of whom were enrolled in the number of the Prætorian cohorts; and he carefully disposed of all the appointments which became vacant in such a manner as he considered would procure to himself faithful adherents and partisans. He had been acquainted with Marcus when he joined the army of Severus at Rome, previous to the commencement of the Eastern campaign; and he had not failed to observe the energy and decision of character that marked the ardent young soldier. The report of his courage and abilities in war had since reached him, and he no sooner heard of his arrival in the Capital, and the distinguished reception he had met with from the Emperor, than he determined to court

his intimacy, and endeavour to gain him over to his faction.

At that time Rome was divided into two parties by the jealousies and dissensions of the two sons of Severus, Caracalla and Geta; who, from their earliest years, appeared to have an implacable hatred towards each other. It was their father's intention that they should both be heirs to the throne, and jointly govern his extensive empire; and with this view he had associated Caracalla, the elder, with himself in the cares and the dignities of the imperial crown; and designed to raise Geta also to the same elevation in a few years*. At the period of which we are speaking, the brothers held very unequal ranks, but this did not prevent their feeling mutually jealous and distrustful of one another; and their aversion, which strengthened with their years, was eagerly fomented by the arts and insinuations of their respective favourites and adherents; so that at length, at every public assembly, the people ranged themselves with their adverse leaders; and the court, the theatre, and the circus were divided into two factions, each actuated

* This was done about the year 208.

by the hopes and fears that animated their respective chiefs. In the midst of all his glory and prosperity, this bitter animosity between his sons was a source of much grief and anxiety to Severus. It clouded his domestic happiness, and even threatened to overturn a throne which he had raised with so much labour and bloodshed. He endeavoured at all times to maintain a strict impartiality in his conduct towards them, and if Caracalla was first invested with the rank and dignity of Emperor, it was merely in consequence of his seniority; and the same elevation was promised to his younger brother. But this equal conduct only served to inflame the contest. Each desired to attain a decided superiority of power, and while the fierce Caracalla boldly asserted his claim as the first-born, and demanded the allegiance of the soldiery, the milder Geta paid court to the populace, and endeavoured, by flattery and indulgence, to gain himself a party also among the troops.

The proposed marriage of Fulvia Plautilla to the young Emperor, necessarily caused her wily father to attach himself ostensibly to the party of Caracalla; who, for a time, believed

him sincere, and deemed that the whole Prætorian band were, with their leader, devoted to his cause. It was in order to secure to himself so powerful and influential a partisan as the Præfect, that Caracalla consented to unite himself to the daughter of Plautianus, whose proud temper and unattractive manners, rendered her disagreeable to him, notwithstanding her beauty and wealth. But it was his own interests,—not those of Caracalla,—for which the Præfect laboured; and for which he lavished flattery, and honours, and treasure, and paid court to all whose favour or assistance could promote his traitorous schemes.

In pursuance of this object he paid marked attention to the Carthaginian envoy; and, being a man of considerable ability, and plausible manners, he soon succeeded in ingratiating himself with Marcus, and obtaining his confidence. As a proof of his regard, he appointed him as one of his military tribunes of the Prætorian guard, thus, as he hoped, securing his grateful attachment to his person, and also retaining his presence in the capital until his own ambitious projects should be rife for execution. The Præfect observed the dejec-

tion of spirits under which his young protégé laboured, and the little interest which was excited in him during the first few weeks of his residence in Rome, by the splendid preparations that were going forward on every side for the approaching accumulated festivities. With some difficulty he wrung from him a full account of the cause of his sadness, and a confession that his thoughts and hopes were fixed on the possibility of his wife's retracting her declared resolution. He announced his intention of returning to Carthage, as soon as the business of his embassy should be completed, in order to ascertain his fate; and, if it should prove in accordance with his wishes, he assured the Præfect that no honours or dignities should induce him to abandon his happy home, or remove his wife from her family, unless with her own free consent. But if he should find her still obdurate, and a reconciliation should thus be rendered impossible, then he would return to Rome, and endeavour to forget his grief and disappointment in the excitement of public life and military occupations.

Plautianus affected the greatest sympathy in his friend's anxieties, but he resolved at the

same time to prevent, if possible, his return to Carthage, at least until after the accomplishment of his own schemes of ambition. He, therefore, endeavoured to place Vivia's conduct in the worst possible light; he strongly reprobated her impiety, and spoke with pretended zeal of the offended majesty of the gods, and the calamities that the Christians were the means, either directly or indirectly, of bringing on the empire at large; and he eloquently expatiated on the duty of every Roman citizen, and more especially of every one who possessed the talents and qualifications of his young friend,—to show no indulgence towards these unnatural enemies of religion and the state. He warned him against believing any professions of repentance that suffering might extort from his apostate wife, and assured him that such professions could never be relied on, and that he had seen innumerable instances of pretended penitents falling back into heresy, and even dying in its defence, after having, perhaps, sown the seeds of their pernicious faith in the hearts of many members of their family and connexion.

The Præfect saw that his arguments had

some weight with Marcus; and, in order to insure their full effect, and still more to divert him from his intention of soon returning to Carthage, and his possible resignation of the tribuneship, he pressed him to take up his abode in his own sumptuous dwelling, where all that luxury could devise, and wealth procure, to please the senses, and banish painful or serious thoughts, was to he found in abundance. The vanity of Marcus was gratified by the evident regard and esteem of the man who virtually held the reins of government, and possessed unbounded ascendency over the emperor himself; he was also weary of the solitude which he felt, even in the midst of the gay and crowded city. He gladly accepted the Præfect's proposition, and was speedily received into his mansion as a member of his family. Here he sought to drown the care that had hitherto crushed his spirits, by participating largely in all the gaiety and pleasure by which he was surrounded. The palace of the emperor's favourite was daily thronged by the courtiers and nobility, all eager to obtain the patronage of their master's master; and, as Plautianus was equally desirous of securing

their favour, he was unsparing in the feasts and entertainments that he provided for them. His table was at all times better served than that of the more temperate Severus, and his furniture and equipages far surpassed those of the emperor in variety and splendour. Wit, beauty, talent, and rank, were to be found in the assemblages that met in his gay saloons; and Marcus soon found in the varied attractions of his new abode, a wild, but unsatisfying distraction of mind, and a partial forgetfulness of his sorrow.

He said in his heart, "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore, enjoy pleasure. He sought in his heart to give himself unto wine, yet acquainting his heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till he might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life."—And for a time he thought and felt, that pleasure, and wealth, and power, were "*that good*," and he determined to obtain them, and to enjoy them as his earthly portion, now that all his purer hopes, and his better affections were blighted. Unhappy Marcus! Sooner or later he must prove, as every one

who tries the fatal experiment must ever do, that "all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and that there was no profit under the sun," in such a course of folly and forgetfulness of God! Well is it for those who find out this salutary truth before it is too late to profit by the discovery! Happy is it for those who hear, and take heed to the exhortation of the wise man;—"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but *know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment; therefore,* remove sorrow from thine heart, and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity."

CHAPTER II.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.—1 *Corinthians* ix. 24, 25.

THE honours of a regular triumph, which would have been adjudged to Severus on his return from his eastern conquests, had been necessarily, but reluctantly, declined by him in consequence of the lameness from which he suffered, and which rendered him unable to stand upright in his chariot. It had therefore been decreed by the senate that in the place of the usual solemnities on such an occasion, a triumphal arch should be erected in memory of his important victories. This beautiful arch was already so far completed as to admit of the nuptial procession of Caracalla and Fulvia passing beneath it in their progress through the city, and the day arrived that was fixed for the celebration of the ceremony. The sacred rite

of marriage was performed by the *Pontifex Maximus* with every attendant circumstance of splendour and magnificence that the wealth and dignity of the parents of the youthful couple could command; and nothing was wanting to the perfection of the arrangements, over which the talented Julia Domna, the wife of Severus, and mother of Caracalla and Geta, presided. Such was the influence which her beauty, and her singular mental powers, gave her over her stern and generally implacable husband, that, next to Plautianus, she was his chief counsellor in all affairs, whether public or domestic: and, after his death, her firmness of mind and strength of judgment rendered her a valuable assistant to Caracalla in the administration of his government, although they never availed, at any time, to extinguish or soften the animosity that subsisted between her sons*.

* Julia Domna was the daughter of Bassianus, a priest of the Sun, of the City of Emesa, in Syria. It is said that it was predicted in her infancy that she should be married to a sovereign; and this prediction coming to the ears of Severus, who placed much reliance on astrology and magical arts, he made inquiries respecting her, and finding that her beauty and accomplishments were equal to her royal destiny, he solicited her hand as his second wife, trusting that the Gods would bring about the fulfilment of the prophecy, by raising him to

On the occasion of his brother's marriage, Geta did indeed, at the request of both his parents, lay aside his open hostility, and condescend to take part in the ceremony, and in the succeeding festivities. He officiated as one of the ten witnesses, who were required by the Roman law to be present at the most solemn form of marriage that was employed by them. The engagement made between the married pair at this kind of marriage could only be dissolved by another ceremony, equally solemn; and it was ratified by the vows of the parties, and by the form of tasting a cake made of flour, water, and salt, which was afterwards offered, with a sheep, as a sacrifice to the gods.

These ceremonies were duly performed, and then the young Emperor and his bride passed with a grand procession through the city, scattering money among the populace, and receiving their loud congratulations. The marriage seemed to be all that had been wanting to the good fortune of the favourite. Plautianus was now nearly allied to the throne; but he only looked

the imperial throne, which was at that time the object of his ambitious hopes. His ill-founded expectations were realized; and thus his superstitious belief in astrology was confirmed.

to this alliance as a means of ensuring his success in grasping yet greater power, and more exalted dignity. It proved, on the contrary, the cause of his ruin; for it only increased the dislike with which Caracalla already regarded him, and led him to watch the Præfect's conduct with greater jealousy and suspicion.

For a time, however, all wore the appearance of peace, and amity, and joy. The scaffolds that were erected in the principal streets, and around the forum, and circus, were crowded by thousands of the people, all eager to behold the pompous procession, and to be spectators of the various games and theatrical exhibitions that were provided by the Emperor for their entertainment.

The chariot in which Caracalla and his bride led the procession, was, in many respects, similar to those used by victorious generals on the occasion of a military triumph. It was ornamented with plates of gold, and drawn by handsome white horses. The dress also of the young Emperor corresponded in magnificence with his glittering equipage; being composed of rich purple stuff, embroidered with figures of gold; and his buskins were set with pearls and other

gems. A band of musicians preceded the chariot, which was immediately followed by several others less richly ornamented, and containing the Emperor and his wife, the Præfect Plautianus, and the other members of the imperial family. Then came young men leading victims for sacrifice, to be offered to the various deities who presided over marriage. The horns of the animals were gilded; and their heads and necks, as well as those of their youthful conductors, were adorned with wreaths of flowers, and gaily-coloured ribbons. A band of priests, and officers of state, succeeded, and the procession was closed by a long train of senators, nobles, and citizens.

The air rang with the plaudits of the people, when Plautianus, in all his studied magnificence of attire, passed in view; for they knew that the praises of the favourite were the most pleasing sounds to the ears of Severus, and they supposed they would be equally gratifying to his son-in-law. But it was not so. Caracalla was already jealous of the Præfect's power and influence; and in his heart he resented the part which he had taken in bringing about his marriage with his daughter. He, however, con-

cealed his feelings of displeasure, and wore an air of perfect satisfaction throughout the whole of the varied festivities.

The command of the Prætorian guards was that day delegated to Marcus, whom the Præfect, anxious to gratify, had selected from among the other tribunes for that purpose. It was a post of honour and dignity; and Marcus felt his heart swell with martial pride, as he led these noble troops; and the thought arose in his mind that he might aspire to the rank of Præfect of the imperial guards, if he retained his tribuneship, and waited until the office should become vacant. Ambition was stirred up in his breast; and, for a time, better feelings and better hopes were stifled.

The procession moved towards the temple of Juno, to whom, as the goddess of marriage, the sacrifices of the newly-married pair were to be offered; and at her altars the blood of the victims was duly shed, and all the nuptial rites were declared to have been auspiciously performed*.

* This marriage proved as unhappy as the celebration of it was splendid and joyous. For nearly two years Fulvia was acknowledged as the wife of Caracalla; but at the end of that

Feasts and entertainments of various kinds concluded the day, and the populace were liberally regaled at the expense of the Emperor and his wealthy favourite; but the celebration of the great national games was reserved to do honour to the memory of the victories of Severus, the period for which was fixed a few weeks later. In the anticipation of these games, which were the source of such intense delight and excitement to the ancient Romans, and in the enjoyment of the present festivities, party spirit seemed for awhile to be extinguished, and the two rival factions mingled together in apparent amity. But there was one feeling of animosity that could never be eradicated from the breasts of these idolaters, or hardly even slumber there. It was their detestation of the Christians' name, and Chris-

period his dislike to her became bitter hatred, and he caused her to be banished, with her brother Plautius and her infant daughter, to the Isle of Lipari, where they languished in misery until Caracalla succeeded his father as Emperor; when, by his cruel order, his wretched wife, and her brother, and child, were murdered in cold blood. It is said that, at the time of his marriage, the barbarous Caracalla threatened that if ever he came to the throne he would *get rid* of both Plautianus and his daughter.

tians' practice. Indeed, as we have observed, the seasons of public rejoicing were usually those of the greatest suffering to the disciples of the Nazarene; for then their temperance and moderation, and their abhorrence of everything that savoured of idolatry, were necessarily made more conspicuous by the contrast which they formed to the spirit of indulgence which at such times pervaded the heathen populace; while the severe simplicity of their mode of worship exposed them to the insults and assaults of a cruel people, whose eyes and imagination were dazzled by the splendid paraphernalia of Pagan superstition.

So it proved on the present occasion. Notwithstanding the recent decree of the Emperor in favour of his Christian subjects, the feelings of the heathen populace, which were sometimes restrained, but never changed, broke loose in acts of indignity and violence towards their unoffending fellow-citizens; and the active exertions of the guard were several times necessary in order to save the lives of some unfortunate victim, who fell unprotected into their hands. Nor were pretexts wanting for dragging many of them before the magistrates, who were

only too ready to listen to any charges brought against them, and who willingly exercised their authority by inflicting on them fines, imprisonment, or corporal punishment, to the utmost extent that the law would permit. Thus, amid the sounds of general rejoicing, that for several days filled the Eternal City, the groans and cries of God's people went up to heaven as a witness against their persecutors; and while all others shouted for joy, they alone were in fear and tribulation.

But if their sufferings recommenced at the beginning of this season of festivity, how greatly were they aggravated during its progress! And when the eagerly expected time arrived for the celebration of the grand national games, the wild phrenzy of the people broke through all restraint, and brought their woes to an unwonted pitch. Murders and insults of every description were committed in the open streets; and the multitude, enraged at the refusal of the Christians to be present at the riotous exhibitions that took place during this carnival, broke into their houses, pillaged their effects, and, dragging them to the places of public amusement, committed the most lawless outrages on

those whom they could not induce, by either force or persuasion, to take part in the heathen rites that were going forward.

And Severus "cared for none of these things." He was occupied in receiving the gratulations and addresses of the courtiers and magistrates, and in attending the public games, which, on this occasion, he caused to be celebrated with a magnificence that surpassed that of all his predecessors. The regular period of one hundred and ten years, at the end of which these *secular games*, as they were called, were generally solemnized for the safety and prosperity of the empire, had not expired; but, contrary to all precedent, Severus had decreed that they should be held at this time, and his pleasure-loving people did not dispute his will on this point. For three days, and three nights, which was the time allowed for the continuance of the secular games, the city was a scene of extravagant joy and excitement. The circus and theatres were crowded, and the exhibitions were such as to call forth the unbounded applause of the spectators. But nowhere was the throng more numerous, or the shouts of approbation more loud and frequent, than in

the Circus Maximus, where the chariot and foot races were performed, and where also the barbarous gladiatorial fights were exhibited. This magnificent building was a mile in circumference, and was calculated to contain nearly 200,000 persons. Its form was oval, and a low wall, or platform, twelve feet broad, was built down the centre, nearly from end to end, allowing a course for the chariots to run round it; and at each extremity of the platform three columns were erected, while a noble obelisk occupied the centre.

The whole circus was surrounded by porticoes three stories high, and by a broad ditch or canal, over which bridges were placed at certain distances for the admission of the spectators. At one end of the building were several openings, from which the chariots and horses started; and before these stood two statues of Mercury, holding a chain to restrain the eager steeds until the signal was given for starting. At the other end was the line, drawn on the ground with chalk, which formed the goal of victory; and at this end were three balconies or open galleries, one in the middle, and one on each side, for the

accommodation of the most distinguished spectators.

On the first day of the festival, these balconies were filled by the chief persons of the city, and by strangers of rank, who had come from all parts of the empire, to witness the magnificent spectacle. The Emperor, and his family and courtiers, occupied the centre gallery, and the splendour of the dresses that were worn by the nobles, and their wives and daughters, rendered the habitual simplicity of Severus's attire the more conspicuous. All around him glittered with gold and jewels; but he wore his robe of imperial purple without ornament; and the expression of care and anxiety that sat on his stern, but noble countenance, distinguished him as much from those by whom he was surrounded, as the plainness of his dress: for on that occasion, all, save he, wore the appearance of joy and light-heartedness. Even Caracalla and Geta thought it politic to conceal their mutual animosity, and repress the jealousy that they each felt at any public demonstration of attachment which was paid to the other: and their respective adherents followed the example of their rival

leaders; and forbore to menace and insult each other, that they might the more fully give themselves up to the enjoyment of the spectacle.

There was one individual in the imperial balcony whose heart was as much oppressed with care, and torn by anxious thoughts, as that of his master. But his cares and anxieties were of a different nature, and he knew, from long habit, how to conceal all outward expression of them, and to assume a look of calm complacency, better than the rough general had ever learnt to do. The favoured Plautianus was brooding over his schemes of vile treachery, while he seemed to be fully occupied with watching the progress of the games: and he was planning the murder of his too-confiding master, while he was addressing him in terms of the most respectful friendship. The very cares of government, and weight of empire, which drew deep lines of anxious thought on the brow of Severus, and prevented him from enjoying the festival which he had prepared with so much cost, were the objects of the Præfect's ambition, and the prize which he was resolved, at any risk, to aim at. He be-

lieved that he had firmly established himself in the affections of the people by the liberal gifts which he distributed among the poorer classes, and by the hospitality and affability which he had of late exercised towards those who possessed power and influence in the upper ranks; and he only waited for an opportunity to strike the decisive blow. He had already confided his daring schemes to two or three of his creatures; and had secured their aid and fidelity, by rich promises of reward, when the supreme power should be in his hands. But he still desired to obtain the aid of one other individual, in whose courage and presence of mind he could confide to the uttermost, and who would undertake the perilous and decisive task of assassinating both the Emperor, and his eldest son, Caracalla.

For this purpose, he had set his eye on Marcus; and with this view it was that he had induced him to take up his residence with him. So successfully had he acted his part, that he had inspired the unsuspecting young officer with sentiments of the highest respect and admiration, and rendered him devoted to his interests, while, at the same time, he had contrived to

lessen the attachment which Marcus had long entertained towards his general and sovereign, by artfully insinuating many things which were disadvantageous to the Emperor's public and private character. The ambition which he perceived to be awakened in his young friend's breast, he carefully excited; and frequently urged upon him his fitness for public offices of responsibility and honour, and the dignities to which he might aspire, especially under the auspices of an Emperor who should duly appreciate his merits. This flattery did not fail to take effect on the aspiring disposition of Marcus; but he was far from suspecting the course by which the Præfect intended to propose that he should reach the elevation he envied. Plautianus however resolved no longer to conceal it from him; and he believed that he should meet with neither repulse nor objection to his proposals. The present time of unguarded festivity appeared to him most suitable to his purpose, and the moment of the Emperor's leaving the theatre, which he was to visit the following day, was that which he fixed on for its execution. He anxiously revolved all the details in his mind during the

continuance of the games in the circus: and he determined to submit them all to Marcus, on their return home, and to demand his active and zealous co-operation as the price of his future elevation to the rank of Captain of the Prætorian guard.

The trampling af the horses' feet, the rushing sound of the chariot wheels, the shouts of the spectators, and the shrill blast of the clarions, did not disturb his meditations, though he seemed to be giving his delighted attention to all that was going forward. And truly it was a heart-stirring sight to behold that goodly array of splendid chariots, each drawn by four spirited horses, and guided by the athletic and skilful drivers, who were distinguished by the different gay colours which they assumed as their dress or livery, on the occasion. Red, white, green, and purple, were the hues in which they were attired, and the spectators favoured one or the other colour, according to their taste and fancy.

The order in which the chariots stood was determined by lot; and the person whose office it was to give the signal for starting, did so by dropping a cloth. Then the chain which

hung across the course being withdrawn, the horses sprang forward simultaneously, and the charioteers urged them to their greatest speed. Seven times round the circus was the appointed course; and as, at each circuit, the relative positions of the rival chariots were changed, and now the red, and now the green livery was foremost, the excitement of the spectators became intense, and loud cries and shouts broke forth from the partizans of each driver, to encourage him to use yet greater efforts. As the chariots passed the line of chalk which was drawn across the course in front of the Emperor's seat for the seventh time, a herald loudly proclaimed which was the victor; and, amid the deafening shouts of his party, he was led to Severus, and received a prize of a considerable sum of money, while at the same time, a crown of palm leaves was placed around his brow.

Many of these chariot races were run, and witnessed with undiminished interest by the crowds who thronged the circus; and then the spectacle was varied by a succession of other athletic games, such as foot-races, wrestling, leaping, and throwing the heavy *discus*

or quoit: the victor in each game receiving a suitable prize from the hands either of the Emperor or his favourite. No gladiators were brought into the arena that day to exhibit their cruel and barbarous contests;—this most popular entertainment being reserved to crown the pleasures of the third day.

It was late when Severus and his court retired from the circus to his palace, and Plautianus did not remain there for the rest of the evening. He excused himself from partaking of the banquet that was prepared; and on the plea of fatigue and indisposition, he retired to his own house, where he had appointed the rest of the conspirators to meet him. Marcus joined the gay party at the imperial palace; and while he drained the glittering goblet, and listened to the rich strains of music, and gazed around on the concourse of splendidly-dressed visitants, he thought not of his exiled,—his devoted wife;—he only thought of the best and most rapid means of obtaining rank, and power, and wealth, which would enable him to command and enjoy such dazzling pleasures to the full. Once, and once only, the heartlessness of worldly friendship struck him;

and he felt how little dependance could be placed on the gratitude and fidelity of even the most favoured dependant on a sovereign's bounty and affection. It was when Severus took a golden goblet of wine, and drank it to the health of the absent Præfect, observing, as he laid it down again, that he most heartily implored the gods to prolong the days of Plautianus, and to crown them with every blessing, for that "he loved him so much that he sincerely desired that he might outlive himself*." As the confiding Emperor uttered these words, Marcus thought what a contrast they formed to the expressions which he so often heard from the Præfect, with reference to his master's character, and the prospect of his reign being a long one. Had he known all the dark schemes that then filled the breast of the favourite, the sentiment, though not the words, of the Psalmist, might have occurred to him: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man!—The children of men are deceitful upon the weights."

The brow of Caracalla assumed an expression of dark displeasure, as his father pro-

* This is an authentic anecdote.

nounced the unguarded sentence that escaped his lips, and thus gave utterance to a sentiment that he would have repressed, had he not been excited by unusual indulgence. It seemed to the heir to the throne that such a sentiment implied a wish, on the part of the Emperor, that his favourite minister should succeed him in all his dignities; and this thought was shared by many of Caracalla's friends, and rankled bitterly in his heart, adding to his present dislike of his father-in-law, and his determination to take the first opportunity of disgracing him with Severus.

Marcus left the palace at midnight, and proceeded on foot, with two or three attendants, towards the dwelling of his patron. The sounds of boisterous mirth, and wild excess, were still to be heard in the streets, and, mingled with them were other sounds of a different nature. Cries of fear attracted the attention of Marcus, and a small band of humbly attired persons fled past him at the crossing of a public way, pursued by several intoxicated soldiers. Before their brutal persecutors could reach them, they gained the entrance of a small dwelling, the door of which was hastily opened to receive

them, and was quickly closed when all were safe within. Marcus heard the sound of locks and bolts, and he hoped that the fugitives, whoever they might be, were secure from further molestation. But, while he was yet in sight of the house, the pursuers reached the door, and immediately commenced a furious assault upon it, from which all the entreaties and commands of the young officer were unable to make them desist; and, as they struck violent blows at the door, they accompanied the strokes with the cries for the blood of the Christians, and curses on the head of all who worshipped the Jewish malefactor.

Marcus thus became aware of the nature of the offence of which the fugitives were considered guilty; and, though he had himself taken a very active part in the chastisement of such offenders at Alexandria, and his present treatment of his own wife proved his detestation of the Christian faith, yet, now that all public persecution was by law suspended, he determined, as far as possib'e, to enforce that law, and prevent the violence of the aggressors. But his efforts were altogether ineffectual. Intoxication had aggravated the

rage of these pagans against their more temperate fellow-citizens; and the same evil influence now rendered them deaf alike to the voice of entreaty, and to that of command. By means of the clubs with which they were armed, the door of the Christian dwelling was broken down, and the excited assailants were able to rush in, when their intention was arrested for a moment by the spectacle that met their gaze.

In the entrance stood a tall and venerable man, whose snowy hair and beard fell on his breast and shoulders, rivalling the pure whiteness of the garments in which he was clothed. His countenance was pale, but unmoved by fear. The deep brilliance of his eyes was undimmed by age; and, as he glanced at the rude intruders, and then raised them towards heaven, an expression of dignified courage and calm resignation overspread his fine features. A group of persons of both sexes, and of all ages, surrounded him; some prostrate on the ground, in various attitudes of fear and supplication; and others, who seemed to be animated with the same feelings that inspired the patriarch, standing on each side of him, as if

awaiting his directions how to act. A beautiful little boy clung to the hand of the venerable old man, and gazed up at his face as if he looked to him for safety and protection, and thought no evil could reach him while he was sheltered by that beloved form.

Marcus had pressed forward among the assailants when the door gave way, in order to be ready to succour those within; and when the pagans paused, he had a full view of the striking scene that presented itself. An involuntary sensation of awe and respect crossed his breast as he looked on that aged Christian, surrounded by his flock; but his eyes rested on the child, who both in age and countenance resembled his little Elva,—and thoughts of home, and of disappointed hopes of happiness, which had of late been banished in revelry and excitement, rose within him:—and he resolved that that sweet child, and the saintly being to whom he clung so fondly, should be preserved from insult.

The momentary feeling of surprise, and perhaps of fear, which had checked the movement of the rabble, passed away, and a desire for vengeance quickly succeeded. "It is the

leader of the vile apostates! it is *Saint* Zephyrinus!" they cried, in a tone of mockery: and, rushing into the vestibule, they were about to lay violent hands on the Christian bishop, and drag him into the street, as a long-desired victim, when Marcus sprang to his side, and, drawing the short two-edged sword that was suspended to his girdle, loudly commanded them to retreat, on pain of instant death to the first who should dare to disobey. The tone of authority in which the young officer spoke attracted the attention of the disorderly crew, and some of them recognised him as one of the tribunes of the Prætorian band, and became aware of the risk they ran of incurring a heavy punishment if they treated his orders with disrespect. Their fear of the severity of Roman discipline sobered them in a moment; and, warning their comrades to follow their example, they retired precipitately from the dwelling, leaving Marcus alone with Zephyrinus and his terrified flock.

The gratitude of the Christian Bishop for the timely interference of the tribune, was expressed with the calm dignity of a man who recognised the hand of an over-ruling Provi-

dence in every event, and was resigned to every evil that it pleased his heavenly Father to lay upon him; and who was also grateful for every preservation, and every blessing that it pleased Him to accord. He thanked Marcus, as the instrument of his deliverance, and that of his people; and he invoked a blessing upon him in the name of Jesus Christ; and then he courteously requested to know the name of his benefactor, that he might, in his prayers, remember the Roman officer, who did not disdain to act as the protector of the despised Christians.

Marcus gave his name; and, at the earnest request of Zephyrinus, he promised to visit him again the following morning. He then took his leave, accompanied by the grateful benedictions of the "church which was in that house."

CHAPTER III.

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good. . . . . .

There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.—*Psalm* xxxvi. 1, &c.

THE night was far spent when Marcus reached the Præfect's dwelling, but he had not retired to rest. He was still engaged in earnest conference with his colleagues in crime, and anxiously waiting the arrival of his guest, from whom he hoped to receive good counsel and active assistance in the execution of his treasonable project. Marcus was immediately conducted, by a confidential servant, to the apartment where Plautianus and his accomplices were assembled, and by degrees the whole plot was disclosed to him. He was well aware, from former communications from his patron, that the Præfect entertained the design

of obtaining the throne on the death of Severus, to the exclusion of his own son-in-law and Geta; and, in those days of uncertain succession, and precarious tenure, such a design did not appear to the Roman soldier either criminal or extraordinary. He had fought for the establishment of Severus on the imperial throne, when the general had no other claim but that of force; and he would readily have lent his aid to support Plautianus in his attempt to succeed him, if the Emperor had been called from the throne by death. But he was not prepared to inflict that death by treachery and violence; and, for a time, he attempted to dissuade his friend from such a vile and perilous scheme. He soon, however, perceived that all his arguments and persuasions were ineffectual, and merely excited distrust and suspicion in the Præfect; he, therefore, affected to be himself convinced of the necessity of no longer delaying the execution of what Plautianus had so long resolved to accomplish; and, as any attempt to dethrone Severus must prove fruitless, from the devoted attachment that the greatest part of the army bore to their successful general, no other course lay open to his

ambitious and ungrateful favourite, but the cold-blooded murder of his benefactor.

The question, as to the hand that should be employed to perform the deed, was then raised; and Plautianus ventured to hint to Marcus, that on none of his faithful friends could he rely with the same confidence that he felt in him. He had observed that his young friend was open to flattery, and was peculiarly gratified by his good opinion; and he used all his arts, and all his eloquence, to persuade him that he was the man chosen and fitted by the gods, to free his country from the tyranny of Severus, and the dissensions of his sons. It was a part of the scheme, that Caracalla should, if possible, be put to death at the same time with his father; but Geta, being of a gentler nature, and less to be feared as an opponent, was to be spared; and to all these arrangements Marcus feigned his acquiescence. Nor did he long refuse to be the chief instrument in their accomplishment, for by thus appearing to be won over to his patron's views, he hoped to be able to frustrate all his schemes, and bring upon the unworthy favourite the proper reward of his treachery.

Marcus was ambitious, and he was also vain of his own powers and abilities, and of the honours, both military and civil, that had been conferred upon him; but he was also a man of highly honourable feelings, and of *upright principles*, in the *heathen* sense of the words. Plautianus had readily discovered the weak points in his character, and artfully endeavoured to employ them to his own advantage; but he had not so easily discerned, or so correctly judged of his good qualities, which were of a nature altogether dissimilar to his own crafty and designing disposition; therefore, he believed that Marcus would never resist the temptation to commit any act, by which he hoped to secure to himself wealth, and rank, and power. He had not even a suspicion of the sincerity of the tribune's professions of entire devotion to his cause, and perfect readiness to be employed in any manner that would best conduce to its speedy success. Nothing, therefore, remained but to decide on the safest and most expeditious method of destroying both the Emperor and his eldest son, and thus removing the chief obstacles to the advancement of Plautianus and his adherents.

It appeared that the fates were propitious to the designs of the Præfect; for, to his great satisfaction, Marcus informed him that he was invited to a private conference with Severus on the following day, at which it was more than probable Caracalla would be present; to confer on the reply that should be sent to certain communications of which he had been the bearer, from the Proconsul of Africa. It would be easy for the tribune to appoint guards who were devoted to him and to the Præfect, to attend in the antechambers of the palace; and thus, if he found an opportunity for the commission of the bloody deed, he could rely on the co-operation of his own soldiers, and secure the possession of the palace, and the treasures it contained. This plan was preferred to that which Plautianus had before conceived of attacking the Emperor as he left the theatre; and, after much discussion on all the necessary precautions to be taken, the conspirators parted, to find such repose as the busy thoughts that severally occupied their minds would permit.

Marcus did not close his eyes. A sense of guilt and shame oppressed his soul; for, although he had not the least idea of acting the murder-

ous part that he had pretended to undertake, yet he felt that it was a disgrace even to have had such a crime proposed to him. And, although he now both despised and hated the Præfect for his vile treachery and duplicity, yet he could not forget that he had received many favours at his hands, and had dwelt in his house, as an honoured and trusted guest. It was painful to him, therefore, to feel compelled to betray his benefactor, and requite his kindness and hospitality by bringing on him ruin and destruction. Could he have devised any plan by which he could effectually frustrate the schemes of Plautianus, and prevent their future execution, without exposing him to the wrath of the Emperor, he would gladly have done so. But no such plan suggested itself; and he rose in the morning harassed and fatigued, and uncertain what course to pursue.

His appointment with the Emperor was not until after the conclusion of the theatrical exhibitions; therefore many hours must elapse before the Præfect would become aware that he also had been deceived, and was falling into the net which he had laid for another. These hours Marcus felt it impossible to pass in the

presence of Plautianus, he therefore left his dwelling without seeing him; and merely desired one of his attendants to inform him that business of importance would occupy him for some time, and that he would probably not see him until they met in the theatre. This message did not surprise the Præfect, as he believed that his friend was engaged in making arrangements for the proper guarding of the palace that evening; and he busied himself with anticipations of approaching greatness, and schemes of future glory and power.

Meanwhile Marcus wandered through the streets with no settled object, and with his thoughts engrossed by the one desire of saving the Emperor without sacrificing his benefactor. By what appeared to him a mere *chance*, he found himself ere long in front of the house where he had, the night before, so effectually exerted his authority for the preservation of the Christian Bishop and his flock. He felt a strong desire, for which he could not account, to enter the dwelling, and look again on that venerable man, and hear again the calm, solemn, tones of his voice; and he wished also to gaze again on the open, innocent countenance of the child who

had recalled to his heart so vivid a recollection of his little Elva. He had been invited by Zephyrinus to visit him; and he resolved to do so at once, for he hoped that the presence of two beings who seemed to be so alike in purity, though so differing in age and experience, would calm the tumult of his troubled soul.

Without any further reflection on the possible results of this interview, he knocked at the shattered door, and was immediately admitted by a plainly-dressed attendant; who, on recognising him as the officer whose aid had been so beneficial the preceding night, welcomed him with humble gratitude, and assured him of his master's willingness to receive him. He conducted him to the Bishop's private study; which, as well as all the other apartments, was very simply furnished, and decorated only with a few pictures on sacred subjects, and contained shelves which supported what was then regarded as a valuable and extensive collection of manuscripts.

When Marcus entered the room the Bishop was seated at a table on which lay several books and papers; and, from one open volume before him, he was earnestly instructing the little

Camillus, who stood between his knees, encircled by the old man's arm, and read in a slow, sweet tone, the words to which Zephyrinus pointed. The tribune paused, for so occupied were both the teacher and the pupil, that they did not for a moment perceive his entrance; and he heard Camillus gently utter these words:

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved. But Thou, O God, shalt bring them down to the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in Thee."

From what volume could these words of comfort and of wisdom be drawn? Marcus had never read such gracious declarations in the writings of any of the sages and philosophers of Rome or Greece; but they struck upon his ear and upon his heart also, as words of solemn import, and peculiarly adapted to the present disturbed state of his own mind. He was oppressed with a very heavy burden of shame, and doubt, and disquietude; and gladly would he cast it from him, and find support and guidance. He felt that he had erred from the

path of rectitude and honour, by the encouragement which he had given to the Præfect's schemes for their mutual aggrandizement in the event of the Emperor's death: and he was conscious that his evident approbation of these schemes had emboldened Plautianus to disclose to him the vile and treacherous means by which he now designed to hasten the event he so ardently desired. This reflection weighed heavily on his spirit. He had, to a certain degree, become an accomplice in guilt from which his soul revolted; and in order to prevent its fatal results, he had been compelled to resort to the same deceitful course which he so much abhorred in another; and would, most probably, find himself compelled to become the cause of his benefactor's destruction. He felt that he had no claim to the support promised to "*the righteous*" in the words he had just heard: and he also felt that the threat pronounced against "the bloody and deceitful man" might in some degree, be applied to himself as well as to Plautianus; and was he a fit instrument to bring another sinner to justice? He resolved to confide all his doubts and anxieties to Zephyrinus, under a solemn promise of secresy; and he knew enough of the

Christians to be assured that the venerable Bishop would never betray the trust reposed in him, or break his word, even to preserve his life. Marcus had hitherto hated the Christians' doctrines, and opposed their practice, with all the cruelty and bitterness of superstitious bigotry and party spirit: but he had often been compelled, in spite of himself, to admire the courage, and respect the virtue and fidelity of Christian professors; and the conduct of his own wife and child, deeply as it had grieved him, and much as it had roused his anger, had nevertheless inspired him with wonder and admiration. So he resolved to make a Christian his confidant and adviser in his present troubled state of mind: and he felt an inward conviction that his confidence would not be abused, and that the counsel he should receive would be wise and disinterested.

These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind as he stood for a few moments at the open door of the small apartment, and waited till the attendant announced his name to the Bishop. Zephyrinus then rose, and advanced courteously to meet him, at the same time expressing his pleasure at so early a visit from his young pre-

server, while little Camillus also approached him, and courted his observation by his smiling countenance and extended hand. Marcus seated himself, and endeavoured to converse with the animated and intelligent Bishop on general subjects; but his mind was so occupied that he found it impossible to bear his part in the conversation; and he soon told Zephyrinus that he had a subject of great importance on which he desired to consult him in private. A sign from his grandfather sent Camillus from the room; and the tribune, with some hesitation, requested a solemn promise from the venerable old man, that no considerations should induce him to reveal what he was about to relate to him. Zephyrinus immediately complied, but with this reservation, that his promise should not bind him to do, or to refrain from, any thing that could prejudice the cause of Christianity, or injure any member of his flock: and with this Marcus was satisfied, and proceeded to give him a full and detailed account of his intimacy with the Præfect, his knowledge of his ulterior designs on the throne, and his recent discovery of his murderous intentions towards the Emperor and his son. He even confessed his own par-

ticipation in his patron's hope of one day possessing the imperial power; but he earnestly deprecated any suspicion of having really joined him in his treasonable projects, and declared his firm resolution of frustrating them, which he wished, if possible, to accomplish without bringing utter ruin and disgrace on Plautianus.

Zephyrinus was astonished at such a communication being made to him, and by a heathen Roman officer; and he could not help expressing his surprise.

"My son," he replied, "why have not you confided this dreadful secret to some one of your own rank in life; and whose knowledge of courts, and experience in deeds of blood and warfare, might render them better able to give you counsel in such a case than I can do, who live in obscurity, far apart from the busy world?"

"Because," said Marcus, "I know not one of my own companions and acquaintance in this great city, on whom I could depend for a disinterested and unprejudiced opinion. All are actuated by party feeling or personal ambition, and would probably advise me according to their view of their own private

interests. But you can have no motive for concealing your real opinion with regard to my duty in this matter; and, forgive me, if I add that there is something in your countenance which inspired me with respect and confidence the first moment I saw you. Chance brought me to your door this morning;—and the recollection of what I felt last night induced me to request an interview with you, and entrust you with a secret, on which the fate of the Empire depends. Tell me then, I entreat you, what you consider the most honourable course for me to pursue:—to go directly to the Emperor, and disclose to him the whole extent of his favourite's duplicity and treason, and thus ensure his instant destruction:—or to warn Plautianus of his danger, and give him an opportunity to escape the merited punishment of a crime, in which I am resolved to have no further share?"

Zephyrinus listened attentively, and then replied:

"Tell me candidly, my young friend; are you not led to desire the escape of the Præfect from a punishment which you confess he deserves, quite as much by your dread of the

Emperor's becoming acquainted with your own ambitious hopes and projects, as by your reluctance to bring evil on the head of your benefactor?"

"I confess," answered Marcus, "that I feel a great difficulty in making Severus acquainted with what it is necessary he should know, without also giving him reason to believe that I have consented to attempt his son's exclusion from the throne in case of his death; and such a belief on his part would, probably, mar all my future prospects in life. But I do likewise feel a sincere wish to avoid being the cause of Plautianus' destruction, although I now entertain for him the most profound contempt and abhorrence, and am convinced that his death can alone ensure the tranquillity of the Empire."

"Your motives are not pure, my son. If you now repent of the part you have taken in the Præfect's intended rebellion and crime, you can only prove it by a full and frank confession to the Emperor: and if you abhor the guilt and treachery of your former associate, and are convinced that violence and bloodshed must be the consequence of his prolonged life,

you are bound by your allegiance to your sovereign, and by your duty to a power far higher than the Emperor, to bring the criminal to justice at any sacrifice of your own personal feelings, or even your public character and reputation. I see that your own reason and conscience are on my side of the argument. Reflect a moment, and you will doubtless come to the right decision."

Marcus paused; and a burning blush suffused his fine manly countenance; for he felt that the aged Christian had probed his inmost sentiments, and had disclosed to himself how much of selfishness was mingled with his indecision: and how strongly he was actuated by anxiety for his own credit with the Emperor, while he had persuaded himself, and sought to persuade his hearer, that his only motive was pity and gratitude. He was by nature ingenuous; and he looked up at the old man, whose penetrating eyes seemed to read his soul, and replied at once:

"You know me better than I know myself. I confess that you are right: for I cannot deny that if justice could be obtained on Plautianus without any disclosure that could

affect myself, I should not regret it. But I have cherished high and ambitious hopes. I have looked to public honours and distinctions to banish the remembrance of domestic sorrows. And I fear to blight my prospects by exciting the slightest suspicion of my fidelity in the mind of our stern and jealous Emperor; and thus being banished from Rome, and compelled to return to a home that has lost all its charms to me."

"If such is the case, my son, I pity you. I know what it is to be left alone in the world, and to lose, one by one, all those who made home dear to my heart. Except that sweet child, I have not a tie to life remaining. Brethren, wife, children,—all are gone, where I hope, ere long, to follow them. But you are young to have experienced sorrows like these."

"You mistake me," replied Marcus. "I did not speak of death as the cause of my afflictions. They are of a nature that I cannot at present disclose to you. The day may come when I shall ask you to listen to the story of my past life; but now the present occupies my thoughts, and I must decide and act. I feel that you are right; and such being my con-

viction, I will act in accordance with it, and go at once to the Emperor. I may find it difficult to convince him of the guilt of the Præfect, even when I confess all that has passed. But I will do what I now see to be my duty, and leave the rest to chance."

"No, my son," replied the Bishop, solemnly, and laying his hand on his arm, as he rose to leave him. "No, my son, leave the rest to the God of Heaven and Earth, in whose hands are all events, and who overrules all according to His unerring wisdom. 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.'"

"Ha!" exclaimed Marcus, "those were the words that I heard read by that lovely boy as I entered your study. Tell me who was their author, and what is the volume that contains them?"

"God is their author, my son; and the volume that contains them is the Bible, in which is revealed all His will, and all His dealings with man. Gladly would I read it with you."

"No," replied Marcus, hastily, for he feared

the Bishop was about to speak to him of the doctrines of Christianity, and he was not prepared to listen to them with patience. "No, father, I have no leisure for such studies. I go to perform a painful duty, and I will come again on a future day, and tell you all the result of my present conference with you. May the gods be propitious to me!"

"May the Lord bless you, my son!" answered Zephyrinus; and so saying he led him through the vestibule.

"You had better go out by the private garden entrance," he continued, "for your visit to this house may be observed and commented upon; and I desire not to attract any observation."

They passed into a small enclosed garden, at the back of the house; and Camillus, who was playing among the flowering shrubs, ran up to his grandfather, and exclaimed, in an audible whisper,—

"Is not the officer very like Octavius?"

Zephyrinus checked him instantly, for he feared to injure his friend and convert Octavius, by making his acquaintance with him known to a heathen officer, more especially

one who came from Carthage; although he was not aware that any connexion subsisted between them, and saw that it was merely the dress and air of Marcus that had recalled the recollection of Octavius to the boy's mind. Marcus heard the question, but did not notice it. He left the garden by a small door, that opened into an alley, and proceeded rapidly in the direction of the imperial palace. The name of "Octavius" had struck his ear, and he had remarked the anxiety of the Bishop to prevent the child from continuing to speak of some person bearing that well-known name, and therefore he had asked no questions; but now it recurred forcibly to him, that he had heard his brother-in-law, Octavius, allude to a venerable man named Zephyrinus, with whom he had become acquainted at Rome; and the thought crossed his mind that it could be no other than the Christian Bishop; and he determined, if possible, to ascertain whether his suspicion was well-founded. Why, he thought, should Octavius cultivate the acquaintance of the Bishop, and then conceal it? And why should Zephyrinus show such fear of his hearing the child's remarks? Suspicions arose in

his mind, which connected themselves with the change in Vivia's religious sentiments and also in those of Julius; and he was still occupied in reflecting on this painful subject, when he found himself near the portal of the Emperor's palace, and remembered that he had an important and somewhat dangerous errand to fulfil.

His rank and office procured him immediate admission to the private cabinet, where Severus was transacting business previous to going to the theatre. Without much introduction, Marcus informed him of the purpose of his visit; and the indignation of the Emperor was equal to his surprise at hearing such an accusation against his favourite and highly-esteemed minister. For some time he refused to give any credence to the assertions of the Tribune; and even went so far as to express his belief that the whole story was the malicious fabrication of those who envied the Præfect's prosperity, and desired to rise on the ruins of his wealth and power. The proud spirit of Marcus was chafed at this insinuation; but he felt that he was not himself altogether guiltless, and he bit his lips, and repressed the retort that rose to

them. With all the calmness that he could command he assured the Emperor of the attachment that he had hitherto felt for Plautianus, and of the pain he experienced in thus revealing the guilt of his benefactor, which nothing but a sense of the duty he owed to his General and Sovereign could have induced him to do. In proof of his sincerity, and of the truth of his declarations, he openly confessed the conversations which he had held with the Præfect on the subject of his succeeding to the throne in the event of the Emperor's demise. Severus did not show the displeasure at this confession that Marcus expected; and he remembered the remark that he had heard him make the preceding evening, when he drank the health of Plautianus, that he "loved him so much he wished he might outlive him."

"Ah," said the Emperor, sadly, as he began to feel some conviction of his favourite's guilt and ingratitude. "Ah, if that had been all, it might have been pardoned. But my life!—that he should attempt my life by violence! No, Marcus, I can never believe it!"

"Then, my General," replied the Tribune,

"if my assertions are insufficient to convince you, suffer the Præfect to convict himself. Let me bring him here this night under the impression that I have executed the dreadful task that he would impose upon me, and I doubt not but you will then be fully satisfied of the truth of all that I have declared to you."

"Do as you will," answered the Emperor, somewhat sullenly; "but your life for that of Plautianus, if I find any reason to believe that you have attempted to deceive me."

"I am satisfied," said Marcus. "At midnight I will bring the Præfect to the palace, and I only request you to be ready to receive him in such a manner as to strike terror into his guilty heart."

"I shall await you in the hall at the end of the passage, in the north wing," replied Severus, and weary and distressed, he made a sign to the Tribune to retire.

The theatrical entertainments were about to commence, and all waited the arrival of the Emperor with impatience, when a herald proclaimed that he was prevented by indisposition from appearing in the theatre. Caracalla and

Geta, however, presented themselves, and the spectacle proceeded amid the plaudits of the crowd of spectators. Plautianus also was there, and distinguished himself by the gracious affability of his manners, and the liberal gifts which he commanded to be bestowed on the most popular actors. Marcus had returned to his house from the palace, and assured him of the satisfactory arrangements which he had already made, for ensuring the success of their project; but he excused himself from attending him to the theatre, on the plea of having yet to attend to the posting of the proper guards in and around the palace. The fact was, that Marcus was but a novice in dissimulation, and he found it impossible to remain near the Præfect, and assume such an air of cordiality and composure, as should prevent his entertaining any suspicions of his fidelity to the cause he had so much at heart.

Plautianus retired to his home at the conclusion of the entertainment, and there he waited with great impatience for some intimation of the success or the failure of the plot. Its execution was entirely entrusted to Marcus, who was authorized to require the attendance of such of the

conspirators as he should select to accompany him to the palace, and to be in readiness to enter the cabinet at his summons, and assist in the accomplishment of the murderous design. The palace was then to be taken possession of by the guards, and immediate intelligence of the event to be conveyed to the Præfect by Marcus himself.

It was near midnight before any sound fell on the anxious ear of Plautianus; and he began to fear that the plot had failed, and that possibly his friend had fallen in the attempt. Fears for his own safety then arose in his mind; but while he pondered, and hoped, and feared, a familiar step was heard approaching his chamber, and in an instant Marcus entered.

"Is it done?" exclaimed the traitor, in a low and hollow voice.

"Come and see," replied Marcus with all the calmness he could assume; "come and see the bodies of the tyrants lying cold and helpless, and hear the joyful acclamations that will proclaim you Emperor, as soon as this glorious deliverance is known. No time must be lost, for if the discovery should be made during our

absence, Geta might be before us; and though our party is strong, and the palace secure, yet it is well that you should be ready to show yourself to the people, clad in the imperial robes, at the same moment that makes them aware of the death of their oppressors."

Plautianus no longer hesitated. He followed the Tribune, who led him rapidly through the streets, which were dimly and partially lighted by the torches of passengers, and the gleams that fell from the open windows of houses, where revellers were still busy at the feast or the dance. Silently the conspirators passed on, for both were deeply agitated by their respective feelings, and both were occupied with thoughts which they cared not to communicate to each other. They reached the palace, and the Præfect saw with satisfaction, that the portal was guarded by the troops under Marcus's command. They saluted their officers with profound respect, and the same reverence was shown by every attendant, and every soldier whom they met in the spacious halls and corridors through which they passed. Still the heart of Plautianus beat violently, and his limbs trembled, and his breath was short

and oppressed, as he followed his guide along the passage that led to the apartment where he was to behold the accomplishment of his long-cherished hopes, and look on the lifeless forms of his betrayed master and his own son-in-law. Guilt is always cowardly, and the traitor feared he knew not what, for he had no doubt of the sincerity of Marcus, and no suspicion that he had himself been deceived.

The Tribune struck at the door with the handle of his sword, and it was instantly thrown open. What words can describe the surprise and consternation of the Præfect! Instead of a gloomy chamber of death, such as he had pictured to himself, he beheld a brilliantly lighted hall; and in the centre were the living forms of Severus and Caracalla, magnificently attired, and seated on thrones, as if ready to receive him. In his agony of terror and amazement he turned to fly, but already the passage was filled with the very guards on whose support he had calculated, but who now seized him as their prisoner, and dragged him to the foot of the Emperor's throne.

Severus regarded him a moment in silence; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, he ex-

claimed, "Can it be Plautianus who is come to gaze on the dead body of his Emperor and his friend; and who flies in fear and disappointment at finding him yet alive? Is it guilt that blanches his cheek, and agitates his frame? Oh, Plautianus, my friend—my friend! I had not believed it if I had not seen your face. But speak;—even yet it may all be false. Why came you here at this unseasonable hour? and why are you thus trembling and confused?"

"It is too late for deception now," cried the Præfect, as he fell on his knees at the feet of Severus, and convulsively clasped his knees. "I have been betrayed, and no hope remains for me but in the clemency and long-tried affection of my Imperial master. Spare me, Severus, spare me! and never again shall my fidelity be even doubted. A mad ambition seized me, and false friends fomented it in order to compass my ruin: but I see my error—my crime! Oh! spare me, that I may yet make reparation for the past, by my future devotion and love!"

The stern countenance of Severus began to relax, and there was a moment of breathless

silence in that crowded hall. Could it be that the hitherto implacable and cruel Emperor was about to forego the revenge that was in his power, and pardon the base ingratitude and treason of his unworthy favourite? Caracalla feared it; and he sprang from his seat, and drawing his dagger, he came behind the kneeling wretch, and was about to plunge it into his heart. But Severus beheld the action, and catching his son's uplifted arm, he averted the blow; and, at the same moment, he cast the skirt of his flowing purple robe over the suppliant, as if to shield him beneath his imperial power. But his attempt was unavailing. Caracalla seized the Præfect in his powerful grasp, and flung him from his father's knees, crying out,—

"Death to the traitor! Prove your allegiance, brave guards; and rid the world of a base, ungrateful minion!"

There were many in that hall who hated and envied Plautianus; and the words had scarcely escaped from the lips of Caracalla before swords and daggers were gleaming in the torch-light, and the next moment were sheathed in the body of the traitor. His career of ambition,

and rapacity, and intrigue was ended, and his spirit was sent violently forth to its final and dread account!

The soldiers and servants, who now rushed in from all parts of the palace, would have dragged away the bleeding corpse of the victim, to wreak on it their fruitless vengeance; and the inhuman Caracalla sought not to prevent the outrage. But Severus, who had remained motionless and silent during the fearful scene, now rose up, and, in a tone of stern command, ordered the ruffians to desist.

"The friend of Severus," he cried, "shall not have the burial of a dog. Marcus," he added, turning to the tribune, who stood near him, "you have done me good service to-day, and it shall not go unrequited. Now show your attachment to me yet further by preserving the remains of my unhappy Præfect from insult. I give his body into your charge to provide it with the honours of sepulture. Farewell, I must seek repose."

The Emperor left the hall, and Caracalla followed him, accompanied by the courtiers and attendants; and Marcus immediately commanded a litter to be brought, on which the

mangled body was placed, and covered with a cloak. It was then borne to the Præfect's dwelling, and the following day the funeral rites were performed according to the wish of his much-injured master.

CHAPTER IV.

I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth.....

And behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

And I turned myself to behold wisdom.....

Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.—*Ecclesiastes* ii. 1, 12, 13.

THE spirits of Marcus had received a shock from the recent dreadful event, that quite indisposed him to take any further share in the gay scenes that still kept the city in an uproar. The discovery and frustration of the Præfect's conspiracy only added to the demonstrations of joy that were already so lively; and fresh entertainments of every description were given by the Emperor in order that his people might have an opportunity of manifesting their loyal feelings on his preservation. At every scene of festivity the presence of Marcus was desired, as an honoured guest; but he declined all participation in such pleasures. He was weary of

such scenes, and they had ceased to distract his mind from the sorrow that dwelt there; and he resolved to seek relief in confiding his affliction to the venerable Bishop Zephyrinus. He had visited him the morning after the death of his unhappy patron, to inform him, according to his promise, of the result of his proceedings. But he was at that time so much agitated, and so much occupied also in changing his abode, and seeking a suitable lodging, that he had not entered on the subject that had lately recurred so forcibly to his mind. What motive impelled him to offer his confidence thus freely to a Christian, he could not explain to himself; but there was an attraction in that old man, and in his playful grandchild, that Marcus could not resist; and there was a sense of repose when he entered their dwelling that was refreshing to his spirit after all the glare and glitter of public spectacles, and the bustle and noise of military business. The welcome, too, that he received from both his aged and his infantine friend gratified him by its evident sincerity and unaffected simplicity; and he wondered less than he had formerly done at the lives that were led by professors of Christianity, and the

strong objection they manifested to take any part in the more exciting business and pleasures of the world.

The weary Tribune repaired to the dwelling of the Bishop, whom he found occupied with attending to the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of his flock; but as he begged him to remain until he was at leisure, he repaired to the garden, where he heard the merry voice of Camillus, and was greeted joyfully by the child. The remark of the little boy respecting Octavius recurred to his mind; and he soon learned from the artless child enough to convince him that the brother of Vivia had not only been a frequent visitor at the Bishop's house, but that he had also become a convert to his religion, and a partaker in his forms of worship. This conviction grieved him extremely; but it also led him to reflect deeply on the wonderful power which must reside in the doctrines held and taught by the Nazarenes, since they could so rapidly subdue the hostility, and enthrall the spirit of those who listened to them, and turn the bitterest enemies of the crucified Jesus into his warmest and most devoted friends. The prejudices of

Octavius had formerly been as strong as his own; and had *he* become a Christian? Then no wonder if Vivia had fallen into the same delusive snare that had drawn both her brothers from their ancient and hereditary faith. But what could be the charm in these new doctrines that rendered them so irresistable, and so influential, on the disposition and conduct of those who embraced them?

Marcus was weary of pleasure; and for the moment he felt weary also of the pursuits of ambition; for Plautianus had disappointed him; and the part he had been obliged to take in his patron's disgrace and death had wounded his better feelings, and disgusted him with the world. That kind of reaction that so commonly takes place after strong excitement, especially where disappointment has been strongly felt, disposed the Tribune to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," and to turn his thoughts towards "*the Unknown God*," "if haply he might feel after Him, and find Him." His motives for the search were mixed, and some were merely selfish. The hope of finding distraction of mind in a new pursuit;—curiosity to discover the secret spring

of the change in Vivia and her brothers;—and perhaps an unacknowledged feeling that *possibly* a full knowledge of all that Vivia knew and believed, might make them of one mind again, and restore to him all that he had lost;—these were the impelling causes of the resolution which he formed, as he talked with Camillus in the Bishop's quiet garden:—namely, that he would inform Zephyrinus of his connexion with Octavius, and of the events which had driven him, as a voluntary exile, from his home and his country; and would then entreat him to give him a full and detailed account of the faith and practice of the Christians, and of the grounds on which their extraordinary belief rested.

He was soon summoned to the Bishop's study; and, always quick in his resolves, and hasty in their execution, he was not long in introducing the subject that was now nearest to his heart. He began by speaking of Octavius, and communicating to the venerable Presbyter his suspicion that his young friend and convert was no other than his own much-esteemed brother-in-law, the son of Horatius, of Carthage. Zephyrinus looked surprised,

and somewhat troubled at this declaration. He was ignorant of the motives which led the Roman officer to speak to him on such a subject; and although Marcus had befriended him and his flock when he saw them exposed to unlawful outrage and insult, he had no reason to believe that he entertained any kindly feelings towards the Christians, or their doctrines; on the contrary, he had heard from his oppressed brethren at Alexandria how he had persecuted the church in that city, and the active part he had taken in "haling men and women" before the judgment-seat of the chief magistrate. He therefore feared, lest he might have some evil design in questioning him concerning the conversion of Octavius; and he did not court martyrdom or persecution, either for himself or his flock; although he was ready to endure both, and to encourage them to do the same, whenever they should lie in their respective paths of duty.

For a time he endeavoured to avoid replying to the surmises of Marcus; but the Tribune quickly guessed his motive, and hastened to assure him that neither he nor his friend would incur any risk or danger in consequence of his

obtaining the information he sought; for that although he was far, very far, from approving of the conduct of those who abjured the religion of their country, to run after strange gods, and although he had reason deeply to deplore the increasing prevalence of such an error, yet he would never take advantage of any confidential communication that might be made to him to bring any heretic into trouble, most especially, his long-tried friend and brother, Octavius. He then entreated the Bishop to tell him candidly, whether his suspicions were well-founded; and, if so, to explain to him what wonderful means, and what powerful arguments had been employed, to work such an unexpected change on the mind of a man like Octavius.

"I cannot refuse you my confidence," replied the Bishop, "or any longer retain doubts concerning you, which your open countenance and ingenuous manner so powerfully tend to dispel. The Octavius to whom my little grandson alluded in your hearing, is, indeed, the same individual that you suppose him to be, and whom you claim as a near connexion of your own. Excuse me if I say, that I con-

sider you honoured in being connected to a man of such a disposition, and such principles as I believe him to be. But I fear you are, as yet, unable really to appreciate his worth. I fear that he has withheld from you, the knowledge of his own conversion to the only religion that can ennoble the mind, and spiritualize the soul, because he knows that it would embitter your feelings against himself and against one who ought to be the dearest object to you on earth. I begin now, Marcus, to be aware whom I am conversing with; and I am, consequently, the more astonished at seeing you here, and remembering the origin of our acquaintance. Are you indeed the husband of that lovely and exemplary Vivia Perpetua, of whose trials and fortitude I have heard so much, in a letter which I lately received from her brother, Octavius? Are you the father,—I ought to say the happy father,—of that heroic child, Elva, the detail of whose conduct brought tears to my eyes, and a throb of joyful pride to my heart? O Marcus, you are highly favoured by being thus connected to so many of God's chosen ones! How is it that their blessed and holy example has so long been lost on you, and

that you have cast from you treasures, compared to which the wealth, and honours, and pleasures of this world are but as the dust on the balance?"

Marcus remained silent for a few moments, and his countenance was disturbed by inward emotions, both of shame and of anger, He felt that he had acted rashly, and even cruelly, towards his wife and child. He had condemned them unheard, and he had punished their pious constancy, as if it had been perverse rebellion and crime. But he was angry at having his errors laid open to his own sight, and his folly pointed out to him by a comparative stranger, and a Christian. Pride struggled with conviction, and kept him for awhile from replying to the earnest appeal of the Bishop. At length he spoke, and in a tone that led Zephyrinus to hope that his better feelings had prevailed.

"Yes," he said, "Vivia Perpetua *was* indeed my wife,—my beautiful and idolized wife; and I returned to my home, hoping to find her the treasure of virtue, and piety, and affection that I had left her. But I found her *an apostate,*—forgive me the expression, Zephy-

rinus,—a recreant from her husband's faith, and obstinately bent on retaining her newly adopted opinions, at the sacrifice of every thing that I once believed was dearer to her than aught that the world contained. I found her thus changed, and I cast her off, and her Christian child with her;—and now I am wretched."

"I see that you are wretched, my young friend," replied the Bishop. "I see that the Lord is causing you to taste the bitter fruits of your own prejudices and wilful blindness; and I hope and believe, that He is thus dealing with you in mercy, in order to bring you to repentance. Had you been less hasty, and less ready to conclude that your wife had adopted erroneous and criminal opinions; and had you listened to all that it would have been her delight to communicate to you, you might have been convinced that she had not been led away by vain and superstitious traditions, but that she was moved by the spirit of God, to receive the truths of salvation. You might have been spared much sin and much suffering; and you might have learnt more highly to prize, and more dearly to love, the being who could so love her God and Saviour, as even to sacrifice

the object of her most sacred earthly affections, rather than in the least degree dishonour or deny His holy name."

Such language as this was new to the ears of Marcus. He was little accustomed to hear his conduct thus severely reprehended; and he found it rather difficult to endure reproof, even from the lips of his venerable friend. But a certain inward conviction that there was some truth in all that Zephyrinus had said to him, prevented his giving utterance to the feeling of anger that for a moment flushed his cheek, and he remained silent. The Bishop continued,—

"Tell me, Marcus, have you observed, either in your wife, or in any other members of our holy religion, that the doctrines they professed gave rise to any immorality of conduct, or any neglect of their domestic and social duties? I well know that strange and revolting crimes are laid to our charge by those who seek our destruction; and that disloyalty towards the Emperor, and opposition to his government, are supposed to be connected with our refusal to take part in the national forms of worship. But I appeal to you whether any one of these accusations has been really proved against us. On

the contrary, do you not know that the Christians, as a body, are remarkable for the harmlessness of their lives, and the integrity of their conduct; and that they have proved themselves, both in public and private, among the most useful subjects of the empire?"

"You ask me to make great concessions in acknowledging all this," replied the Tribune; "but I came not here to dispute with you. I came to seek comfort, and to learn the truth; and I will therefore be as candid with you as I desire you to be with me. I will own that during all my residence at Alexandria, where I was very actively employed in searching out the members of your sect, and bringing them to justice, I never was able to convict them of any crime except that which I held to be a most heinous one;—the rejection of the gods of Rome, and the obstinate refusal to conform to the laws of the empire, and the commands of the magistrates with regard to religion. And surely this was enough to prove that their doctrines were evil, although in other respects their conduct might be unobjectionable: and therefore I gave my best aid to rid the empire of such disobedient and presumptuous subjects. Could I for a

moment suppose that my own most virtuous and beloved wife would ever become a convert to what appeared to me such pernicious opinions? No words of mine can express to you the shock which I experienced when she publicly declared herself a Christian:—a member of that very sect which I had been taught to despise and hate, and had endeavoured to destroy! I did not seek her death: no, Zephyrinus, I only banished her from her home and her friends, in the vain hope that her love for me would induce her to renounce her heresy, and return to bless me with her presence. And my child too,—my beautiful and engaging little Elva;—she had learnt from her mother to worship the Nazarene, and to defy danger and suffering rather than deny his name; and I sent her to dwell in the wilderness with Vivia; not so much to punish her for a crime, the nature of which she was too young to understand, as to give my poor wife the consolation and joy of her darling's society in her lonely banishment. I loved her then, Zephyrinus, and I admired and respected her too: and now I love and admire her far more; for I begin to suspect that she did not sacrifice all that she so dearly loved and

valued, merely from pertinacity and superstition, but because she was convinced that she only exchanged earthly happiness and earthly comfort, for what she believed would ensure her everlasting joy and peace hereafter."

"You are right, Marcus," replied the Bishop with evident satisfaction at the candour of his confession. "You are quite right in attributing the highest and the purest motives to Vivia; and I thank God for giving you grace in some measure to appreciate them. May He lead you also to a careful investigation of those truths which have so powerfully influenced her; and, at length, may He move you by His Holy Spirit to receive them with your understanding, and love them with your heart, as she has done. How gladly shall I assist you in your enquiries; and how thankful shall I be if they end in your sincere conversion! Thus, and thus only, shall I feel that I have repaid the obligation under which you have laid me, by being the instrument of your spiritual preservation, in return for the temporal safety which your kind interference procured for me and my injured flock. Let me read to you a part of the address which the great Apostle Paul made to the idol-wor-

shipping Athenians. And remember, my young friend, that Paul was not an ignorant fisherman, as many of our Lord's disciples were: but that he was a man well versed in all the learning of his time, and able to distinguish clearly between the truths of God, and cunningly devised fables. He was also a man who had been brought up with sentiments of hatred and opposition to Christianity, quite as strong as any that you have ever entertained; and he was actually engaged in persecuting the followers of Christ at the time when it pleased his Redeemer to call him, and change him from a violent opposer to a zealous disciple. Listen to his words, by which he sought to bring the Athenians to a knowledge of the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ."

Zephyrinus opened his copy of the sacred volume, at the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and read the following verses, to which Marcus listened with deep attention.

"'As I passed by, and beheld your *gods that ye worship*,* I found an altar with this inscription—TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare

* Marginal reading.

I unto you. God that made the world, and things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things: and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' Now, Marcus,"

continued the Bishop, with earnest solemnity, "these words are addressed *to you* as well as to the Athenians. They are the words of reason and truth; and they are the words of Divine revelation also. They declare to you that Jehovah is the *One only true God;* and that Jesus Christ His Son is the appointed judge of the world. Will you refuse any longer to give worship to Him who alone is worthy of it; and continue to bow down to the devices of men's hands,—gold, and silver, and wood, and stone,—which can profit you nothing;—which 'have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths?'"

"I desire to know the truth," replied Marcus, in a tone of calm decision; "and when I am really convinced that your doctrines *are the truth,* believe me I shall not be backward in acknowledging my conviction. You have interested me; and from your lips I wish to hear all that you can tell me of your religion, and the proofs on which its authority rests; for proofs I must have, ere I can renounce the creed of my fathers, and embrace another so utterly at variance with it."

"That is all I ask," exclaimed Zephyrinus, eagerly; "I would give little for a faith that was not founded on careful inquiry, and earnest conviction." And the Bishop proceeded to instruct his attentive listener in the fundamental truths of revealed religion; patiently explaining every point, and replying to every doubt, until he was forced to leave him, and repair to the celebration of the Christian afternoon service, in the apartment where many of his flock assembled daily for prayers and spiritual instruction.

Marcus left the house with regret; but each following morning found him in the old man's study, listening with increasing interest to his pious exhortations, and his reading and explanation of the Scriptures. It could not be that a mind so candid, and so inquiring should fail of being convinced by the words of Divine truth, accompanied as they were by the devout prayer of faith from his teacher. Gradually the mist of ignorance and prejudice was dissipated from his spirit; and the light of the glory of God, as it is manifested in the face of Jesus Christ, became visible to his eyes. He believed:—he believed that Jehovah was the

universal Creator; and that His Son, Jesus Christ, was the Saviour and the judge of mankind;—and, always impetuous, he no sooner perceived that he had hitherto lived in error, than he desired immediately to renounce his errors, and become a professed disciple of the truth. He desired to be made a member of the Church to which Vivia belonged; and then to leave Rome, and all its pride, and pomp, and pleasure, and hasten to his exiled wife, to recompense her for all her trials, and all her sorrows, by declaring the joyful truth that he was now as closely united to her in faith, as he had ever been in heart and affection.

Zephyrinus sympathized in his feelings; but he could not conscientiously hasten his admission into the visible church of Christ, as much as the now repentant husband wished; he could not but feel some doubts as to the purity and spirituality of his motives; and the very readiness with which he received the new truths proposed to him, and the eager zeal with which he appeared to give himself up to the service of a Master whom he had so long despised, caused the experienced Bishop to entertain some fears as to the stability of his faith, and

the future consistency of his practice. Kindly, but firmly, he laid before his new convert all his anxieties and fears respecting him; and informed him of the course of instruction and examination which he must yet undergo, ere he could be admitted into the ranks of Christ's soldiers and servants. Marcus was grieved, but he bore the delay with more patience than Zephyrinus expected; for he felt that the Bishop was right, and that he had no claim upon his special confidence, or on that of the Christian community which he now so greatly desired to enter.

Several weeks elapsed, which would have been full of interest and delight to the Tribune, had not his mind been greatly harassed by anxiety and fear for Vivia and his child, and by grief at the thought of all that his wife had suffered, and must still suffer, so long as the knowledge of his change of heart was withheld from her. He knew that the actual safety of those so dear to him would be secured by the care of the native chief, and that no harm from without was to be apprehended for them:—but oh! it was agony to think of the mental sufferings of his lovely and gentle wife, and innocent

child, and of the feelings with which his cruel and obdurate conduct might have inspired them. He would have written to Vivia, but he knew not whom to trust with such a communication as he had to make to her; and he also yearned to be himself the bearer of such news as would make the desert around her to blossom in her eyes as the rose. So he endured the delay, and strove by his diligence and attention to grow in spiritual knowledge; and he sought by earnest prayer to obtain large supplies of grace, and strength, and heavenly dispositions, to fit him for a place in the Church of his Redeemer here, and in the kingdom of his God hereafter.

His efforts were not unavailing, neither were his prayers unanswered, and Zephyrinus became daily more convinced of the sincerity of his conversion, and the depth and extent of the change which was being wrought in his heart; and he joyfully acknowledged to his young disciple, that if the feelings which had at first led him to Jesus had been blighted affection, and disappointed friendship, yet that he now saw clearly that the Lord had mercifully employed these means for the salvation of his

soul, by effectually leading him out of the darkness of idolatry, and the snares of worldly ambition, to a true and saving knowledge of "Jesus Christ, and *him crucified.*"

The sincerity of the change in Marcus's sentiments, and in his hopes for the future, was put to the test just at the time that the day appointed for his baptism was at hand; for he received an offer from the Emperor to take the command of the Prætorian guards, and succeed the traitor Plautianus in an office which had for some time been the object of his highest ambition. But his feelings were now altered; and power and rank no longer appeared to him the chief objects to be attained in life, and those for which every other pursuit, and every other motive, were to be abandoned. Marcus gratefully but decidedly declined the honour which Severus desired to confer upon him, without even asking time for consideration, or referring the matter to the judgment of his revered friend, Zephyrinus. He perceived at once the utter inconsistency of professing himself a disciple of Christ, and at the same time assuming an office which must bring him into continual intercourse with idolaters and unbelievers; and

which must compel him to be frequently present during the celebration of ceremonies which he now held to be profane and blasphemous, even if it did not also oblige him to assist in the persecution and destruction of those whose faith was now his own. He did not feel himself called upon to declare his conversion to Severus, and thus arouse his anger, not only against himself, but also against those who had been the instruments of that conversion. He had learnt from Zephyrinus that to *bear the cross*, but not to *court it*, is the Christian's duty; and therefore he simply informed the Emperor that he had resolved to retire from public life, and return to Carthage, now that the business of his mission to Rome was accomplished. Severus endeavoured to dissuade him from this resolution; but finding all his arguments unavailing, he forbore to attempt the exercise of his sovereign authority; and he assured Marcus that he should never forget the essential service which he had rendered him, and that, whenever he desired to receive a recompense, and to occupy a position near the throne, and corresponding to his merits, he had only to apply

to him, and he would find that he was not ungrateful.

When the tribune recounted to the Bishop the substance of his conversation with Severus, he received the warm commendation of his pious friend, who assured him that he felt both joy and thankfulness at this proof of the power of divine grace in subduing the desires of the natural man, and manifesting to the soul the superior value of "those things which are not seen, and are eternal." If any doubts of the fitness of his ardent young convert for receiving the rite of baptism had lingered in his mind, they were now entirely dissipated; and when the day which had previously been fixed for the ceremony arrived, Marcus was admitted into the pale of the Christian Church, and received the fervent benediction of the venerable patriarch, and the warm congratulations and affectionate greetings of his fellow-disciples.

He had prepared every thing for his departure from the capital, so that no delay should occur after his baptism; and he hastened to take leave of the Emperor, and receive his dispatches for the Proconsul of Africa, after which it only remained for him to bid farewell to

Zephyrinus and his interesting little grandson, and to those Christians whom he had learnt to know and love in the house of the Bishop. His passage was engaged in a merchant-vessel bound direct to Hippo Zarytus; as he wished to avoid going to Carthage until he had first hastened to his injured wife, and made all the reparation in his power for the sorrows which he had caused her to endure: and, by landing at the above-mentioned port he could easily procure a boat to carry him up the Gulf of Sisera almost to the very spot where he knew the humble retreat of Vivia and Elva was situated. His voyage was prosperous, but ere we follow him to its accomplishment, it will be necessary to return to Vivia, and relate what had befallen her and her child during the period that had elapsed since the visit of Septimius to their hut.

CHAPTER V.

'Tis ever thus, 'tis ever thus, with all that's best below—
The dearest, noblest, loveliest, are always first to go.
The bird that sings the sweetest,—the pine that crowns the rock:
The glory of the garden,—the flower of the flock.

'Tis ever thus, 'tis ever thus, with creatures heavenly fair,
Too finely framed to bide the storms more earthly natures bear:
A little while they dwell with us, blest messengers of love;
Then spread the wings we had not seen, and seek their home above! ANON.

WE have said that the Roman officer who felt so deep an interest in the fate of the exiled mother and child, and strove so unsuccessfully to procure some amelioration of their condition, was struck with the change which he perceived in the personal appearance of both the interesting sufferers on the morning when he took his leave of them. The heart of Vivia was indeed breaking, and mental anguish had made rapid and deep inroads on the freshness of her beauty: but the strength of her spirit,—that strength which she derived from a living faith, was un-

impaired, and revived after the shock of grief had passed away: and the effort which she made to rouse all her energies for the sake of her child, tended powerfully to support her under her severe trial, and even enabled her at times to wear the appearance of *cheerful* resignation. All hope of earthly happiness was gone, and spiritual peace was that for which alone she prayed and sought: and while this heavenly gift was accorded to her, and she could see her Elva growing in grace and becoming a partaker in the same good gifts, she asked no more.

But a trial which she had not anticipated, and which was only less bitter than the severing of the tie that bound her to her husband, now threatened her; and, for a while, the prospect of it almost overwhelmed her. Elva's health evidently began to fail. She did not complain.—She did not even seem to suffer; but the bright hue that was wont to glow upon her cheek was changed to a hectic flush, or occasionally to a deadly paleness. Her eye was not less bright and animated than it had ever been, but its brightness often assumed a look that was strange and unnatural, and her spirits were variable and

uncertain, though the sweetness of her temper remained unaltered. For some time no signs of real disease were perceptible; and Vivia hoped that her darling's indisposition arose merely from some temporary cause, and that she should soon see her restored to her usual health. But it was not so: and Vivia was ere long compelled to acknowledge to herself that the sweet child was gradually declining in strength, and her infantine form was becoming wasted and emaciated. It was a conviction that sickened her very heart, and drove her to her own chamber, to seek in tears, and in earnest supplication to her merciful Father, for that comfort which she so deeply needed.

Lucretia was even more aware of Elva's real state than her unhappy mother suffered herself to be. She had once watched the symptoms of decline in a child of her own, and she knew the signs of its fatal and insidious progress; but she did not dare to breathe the full extent of her fears to her beloved and afflicted mistress; and when Vivia seemed cheered by any temporary amendment in the little invalid, and was deceived by the flattering appearances that generally attend the disease, she encouraged her to

hope, although she felt convinced that hope was vain.

Elva continued to take great delight in walking either to the palm-grove, to enjoy its shade during the heat of the day, or to the sandy shore of the gulf when the evening breeze came cool and refreshingly over its rippling waters: and when Vivia watched her playing on the beach, and gathering the shining pebbles and gay-coloured shells that were thrown up by the retiring waves, she could scarcely force herself to realize the danger that she felt was hovering over her cherished child. But when the little Elva, soon wearied with the effort to find pleasure in her accustomed pastimes, returned with languid steps to her mother's side; and, throwing her collected treasures on the ground, lay down to rest upon her knee, then Vivia knew the extent of the danger, and tears, which she could not suppress, would fall on the sweet face that looked up so lovingly into hers.

"Why do you weep?" asked Elva one evening; when, more than usually exhausted with the walk to the shore, she sat down by her mother on a shelving rock, and, panting, laid her head upon her knee. "Why do you weep,

dear mother? It makes me sad to see your tears."

"I weep to see you so weak and ill, my Elva;" replied her mother, with a strong effort to regain her composure; "and because I have here no means of procuring for you the comforts which you now require. Ah, were we but at Carthage, and in my father's house, my child would not want for all the aid that skill and wealth could afford. But Elva, it is the will of God that we should dwell here in this desolate place; and we must remember that He can heal you if He sees fit, without the help of man."

"Yes, mother, I know it well; for Jesus healed the sick with a word when He was on earth, and you have taught me that He is one with God. But do you think that I shall recover; or that I shall die, and leave you alone in this melancholy place? Tell me, dear mother," she continued, speaking rapidly, and the hectic on her cheek became brighter; "Tell me;—do you believe that I shall die?"

"Your life is in the hands of God, my darling; and He will do with you what He

knows to be best. Should you fear, if you knew that there was great danger of your never recovering? You once told me, in a time of great trial, that you were not afraid to die. I trust that since that time your faith and love towards your Saviour have become stronger, and that you now fear death even less than you did then; for you know more now of Christ's love to sinners, and of the power of His blood to wash away your guilt, and make you clean in the sight of God. Are you afraid to go into the presence of Jehovah, my child, trusting in the blood and merits of His Son Jesus Christ?"

"Oh! no, mother;" answered the child with eager animation: "I have no fear of dying, for I know that Jesus will save all who love Him;—*and I do love Him*, mother; Oh! I love Him dearly!" she added; and, as she spoke, she raised her eyes and hands to Heaven. "But," she continued, looking earnestly in Vivia's face; "I am afraid of leaving you;—you, whom I love next to Jesus, and who love me so much."

There was a pause; for Vivia could not speak. At length the child continued:

"If I die, will my father grieve for me? and will he come for you, and take you home again? I think, mother, that I could not be happy, even in Heaven, if I saw you sitting lonely here, and weeping."

"Oh! my child!" cried Vivia, "think not of my sorrow. The Lord will be with me, and take care of me; and He will, at length remove me from this world, to dwell in that blessed land, where perhaps He will so soon take you. It is good of the Lord to bear you away from the trials and sufferings of this world, which are too great for your young, gentle spirit. But we know not yet what are His decrees respecting you. It may be His gracious purpose only to try you with sickness, and then to restore you to me in health. Oh! Elva, I must yet pray for that blessing; and pray also for resignation, if it should be denied me."

"I will pray, too, mother; I will ask God, for Jesus' sake, to give me health and strength again, that I may see you smile once more, and hear you sing as you used to do at Carthage. And if I must die, I will pray for you in Heaven, and beg the Lord to comfort you, and to make my father love you again, and

take you home, and make you happy. He will listen to my prayer; will He not?"

"God always hears the prayer of faith and love, my child;" answered Vivia, deeply moved; "and He will assuredly hear yours. Pray to Him, then, that He will graciously draw your father's heart to Himself, and teach him to know and love his Saviour. Then I should be happy both here and hereafter; for I should know that death, which separates Christians from unbelievers, would unite your dear father to us, and to God, in Heaven. If I was blessed with this assurance, I could welcome every earthly trial that might be my lot."

"Mother," said the child, solemnly, "I feel as if I knew that God would hear our prayers, and make my father a Christian at last. I may not live to see it on earth; but if I become one of his blessed angels I shall see it from Heaven, and be glad."

And she looked like an angel as she spoke; and Vivia felt her words of simple confidence sink with comfort into her heart.

That evening was the last on which Elva walked to the sea-shore. She became evidently weaker, and the slightest fatigue or

excitement was followed by painful exhaustion. Still she wished to visit her favourite spots; and daily either Vivia or Lucretia carried her little wasted form to the place where she desired to go and breathe the cool evening air; and for hours her mother would sit beside her, as she lay supported by rugs and cushions, and talk to her, and sing to her, and pray with her, and for her. And daily that afflicted mother's heart received the only consolation and joy of which it now seemed susceptible;—the consolation and joy of seeing that her darling was ripening for Heaven; and that, though her heart and flesh were failing, yet that her immortal spirit was daily renewed by the Spirit of God, and made "more meet to be a partaker in the inheritance of the Saints in light." Deeply interesting, and inexpressibly touching to a parent's feelings, were the conversations that took place between this exiled mother and child; cut off, as they were, from all human help, and human instruction. But the Lord was with them, and He taught them as *He alone* can teach the souls of His people.

At times Lucretia would linger near them,

and listen to their discourse; and more than once the little girl called her to her side, and, in language of deep and simple earnestness, appealed to her feelings, and besought her to believe in Jesus Christ, and love Him; that so when she died they might meet in heaven as His redeemed people. Lucretia was affected by the touching words and manner of her little charge; but it did not appear that any other effect was produced at the time. Indeed Vivia remarked that she avoided, as much as possible, any opportunity of being addressed either by herself or Elva, on the things which belonged to her soul; and though her attention to the bodily wants of the invalid were unremitting, and her care and forethought were admirable and untiring, yet her feelings towards the Saviour, who was the constant theme of the child's discourse, were not apparently softened in the least degree. It was sad that the only civilized being with whom they could hold any intercourse, or who was able to sympathize with them in their sufferings, was at the same time utterly incapable of sharing their best feelings, or taking any part in their favourite subject of conversation, or in their simple acts of worship.

The increased illness of Elva was soon known in the native village; and such kindness as its rude inmates could show was lavished on the little sufferer and her mother. The sweetest flowers, and the fairest fruit that they could collect, were brought daily to the hut by the women and children, whose language Vivia and her child began partially to understand; and sometimes Elva would attempt to make them comprehend that she was going to heaven to dwell with God, and His Son Jesus Christ; and beg them to believe in Jesus as their Saviour also; and obey Him on earth, that they might enter into His heavenly kingdom hereafter. But the simple savages only laughed at her broken sentences, and incomprehensible requests. The light that beamed in her own blessed spirit she could not make manifest to others; and the love that glowed in her warm little heart was beyond the knowledge of all but her mother.

Days and nights passed slowly away; and yet Vivia thought they passed too swiftly, for she felt that to Elva they were numbered, and that her life was gradually ebbing with every setting sun. Her sorrow was very great; and she had

no one into whose bosom she could pour her feelings, or who could help her to sustain her grief with the firmness and the meekness which she desired to manifest to the last. How often she longed for the society of her beloved friend Marcella, or for that of one of her Christian brothers! But how much more ardently did she desire the presence of her husband! What worlds would she not have given if he could, but for one short hour, have stood by the side of Elva's couch, and listened to the utterance of his child's faith, and love, and holy trust in her Redeemer! Was such an event altogether beyond possibility?—Was it too much to hope or to *pray for?* No. Vivia remembered the fondness which Marcus had shown towards his child, and the deep interest which she had excited in him. She thought of the anxiety which he had manifested about her health and her comfort during those few happy days that he had passed with her under her grandfather's roof; and she felt a sudden conviction that if he knew the present state to which the lovely little creature was reduced, and the imminent danger in which she lay, all his anger against herself would not prevail to keep him from his inno-

cent child; and he would hasten to behold her again, and to bring to her such medical aid as he could procure at Carthage. The moment that this idea took possession of Vivia's mind she resolved to send Lucretia back to the city under the escort of a party of the natives, and to charge her with a message to Marcus. She was well aware of his intended journey to Rome; but she had understood that his absence would not be long, and she had for some time been expecting to receive from him that last communication which he had informed her, through his friend Septimius, he should make to her after his return. Probably he was at Carthage already, or at all events he must very shortly arrive there; and she determined to lose no time in making an appeal to his paternal feelings. Should it not reach him, she might still hope to give her brothers information of the place of her residence, and the severe trial she was enduring; and she well knew that all the consolation and assistance that it was in their power to give would not be long withheld. The recollection of the pressing offer that her husband's friend Septimius had made, to remove her and her child

to a place of comparative comfort, now recurred vividly to her mind, and almost she regretted that she had not accepted it, for then the health of her little Elva might have been preserved. But she quickly banished the thought; and the remembrance that she had acted on that occasion from the highest and most disinterested motives was sufficient to render her resigned to the apparent consequences of her conduct, and enable her contentedly to leave the result in the hands of that all-wise and all-merciful Father, who overrules every event according to His will: and, who in the end, makes "*all things* work together for good to those who love Him." At the same time the blessed conviction which she enjoyed of being under the direction and government of God's providence, did not lead her to neglect any possible means by which she could hope to preserve the life of her precious child;—the last blessing that seemed left to her on earth, and which now she saw rapidly waning away before her eyes.

Vivia hastened to Lucretia, who was occupied in her household duties, and communicated to her the design she entertained, of informing Marcus of his little daughter's danger, and her

desire that she should herself undertake to execute it. The faithful and devoted servant readily acceded to her mistress's request, and declared her willingness to depart on the welcome mission, as soon as a sufficient escort could be obtained from the native chieftain. The only objection which she felt in regard to the proposed plan, was that Vivia would be left alone for several days, with no other help than what could be afforded by the kindness of the poor inhabitants of the village; but Vivia would not listen to this remonstrance, and Lucretia was immediately dispatched to the chief, to solicit his aid in the intended enterprise. It was readily granted; for he had been instructed to do all in his power to oblige the exiles, consistently with their safety, and their continuance in their appointed place of residence.

As the chief possessed no means of conveyance by land, the direct route to Carthage across the desert was impracticable; Lucretia was, therefore, to embark in a small boat, and be rowed by some of the natives to Hippo-Zarytus, from whence she could easily proceed by ship to the city, accompanied by two

guards, and return by the same method, as the boat was to wait for her at the port. Elva begged to accompany her nurse to the place of embarkation, and she was carried down to the shore, where the boat and the escort awaited her; and there she took leave of the affectionate and devoted Lucretia, who was deeply grieved at parting with her beloved and interesting little charge, even for a few brief days; but the cheerfulness with which the child bade her farewell, and the animated expression that lighted up her fair young face as she embraced her again and again, filled her with a joyful hope, that she might yet bring timely aid to the dear invalid, and see her restored to home, and health, and happiness. She felt that it could not be in a father's heart to resist the appeal which she intended to make to Marcus; and could she but succeed in bringing him to the abode of his wife and child, she entertained no doubt but that the result would be a perfect reconciliation to both, and an immediate removal to the comforts and resources of civilized life.

"Farewell, my dear nurse," said the child, "and come back quickly to me; and, O, bring

my father with you. Tell him that I long to see him once more before I die; and I want him to love my mother again, and take her home to Carthage."

"I will, my child, I will;" replied Lucretia. "I trust I shall prevail on him to come, and to take both you and your mother back to the city, and there I feel sure you would soon be strong and well again. May all the gods of heaven be with you, and preserve you during my absence!"

"God will be with me I know," answered Elva, "and His Son, Jesus Christ, will take care of me. I do not trust in any other gods; and, Lucretia, for my sake, you must learn to believe in the God that I worship, or you will never see me in heaven."

Lucretia was affected, and turned away to hide her tears from Elva, and to bid her mistress farewell.

"Go, Lucretia," said Vivia, kindly pressing her trembling hand in both her own. "Go, and tell Marcus,—tell the father of this child,—that she is dying,—wasting away from the sad effects of climate, and privation, and sorrow. Tell him that I ask no pity for my-

self; but, for Elva's sake, O! implore him to have compassion, and remove her from this place ere it be too late. Surely he cannot refuse to take *her* to his heart and home!"

She sat down on the beach by Elva's side as she uttered these words, and taking the emaciated child in her arms, she gazed on her sunken cheeks for a moment with a look of unutterable tenderness and grief, and then continued in a faltering voice;

"I could even part with you, my darling; and remain here in sadness and solitude, to save your precious life. I could live on the hope, however distant, of seeing you again in health and happiness, if your father would take you with him to Carthage. Yet no! It is better, far better, that your angel spirit should depart in its present blessed state of holy and simple faith:—better,—far better that I should even see you die in this desert, knowing that in heaven we shall surely meet again, than that you should be brought up in the midst of luxury, and affluence, and *idolatry;* and learn perhaps to forget your Saviour, and deny His saving name! Then Lucretia, tell Marcus that where my child goes, I must go: and if we cannot re-

turn together to our rightful home, beg him at least to send us to Utica, or some other place where proper aid can be had to save my Elva's life. If it pleases God to restore her, we will then cheerfully and gratefully return to exile; and bless him, and bless the Lord, for suffering us to remain together. Is not this true, my dearest?"

"I will stay with you, mother," replied Elva softly; and she wiped away the tears that fell from her mother's eyes with her slender little hand. "I will never leave you till God takes me away to heaven; and then you must go home to my father. He will be sorry for you then, when he knows that I am gone, and you are all alone; and if he does not come and take us both now, you must send him a lock of my hair after I am dead, and say that Elva begged him to love her mother again."

Lucretia stepped hastily into the boat, and beckoned to the men, who were gazing with deep interest at the dying child, though they did not understand her words. They took their oars, and soon the little vessel was moving rapidly down the gulf. Elva and her mother watched it until it disappeared behind a project-

ing promontory on the eastern coast; and then Vivia carried her child, who was now weary and exhausted, back to their lonely hut.

From that day a decided change for the worse took place in Elva, and the bright deceitful bloom seldom revisited her cheeks to excite false hopes in the breast of her afflicted mother. A painful restlessness also frequently distressed the little sufferer, and though Vivia sang to her all her favourite songs, and sweetest hymns; and carried her out to the grove, or laid her by the rippling waves on the shore, and talked to her of heaven, and all the joys that there awaited the faithful disciples of Jesus, yet all her efforts were often unavailing in restoring that calmness and sweet placidity which had hitherto marked the child's whole manner and deportment. An anxious expression was frequently visible on her countenance; but her mother could not trace the cause to any fear of death, or doubt of her acceptance with God through the merits and death of her Saviour. No; as far as regarded her eternal prospects the child's soul was at peace; and it was beautiful and deeply instructive to listen to her words of simple trust, and lively hope, and fervent love.

Truly in her case, "as the outward man decayed, the inward man was renewed day by day;" and her natural powers of mind, which were always far beyond her years, were wonderfully increased, and shewed themselves in the strange thoughts and strong feelings which she expressed, and in the manner in which she spoke of spiritual things, and realized the promises of God to her soul. Still her uneasiness continued, and increased for several days, and Vivia believed that it was only the effect of physical weakness and suffering; but one afternoon when she had sat by her little couch for some time, after their return from the sea shore, whither Elva now invariably begged to he carried, the child looked up in her face, and bursting into tears, exclaimed;

"Oh, mother! I fear he will be too late:—my dear, dear father will not come in time to see his little Elva alive! I thought he would have come to-day; and I have counted the quick passing hours; for I feel that I shall not stay much longer with you,"

"Do you feel so very ill, my love?" asked Vivia, scarcely able to command her voice. "I trust it may please God to spare you yet to see

your father on earth. But oh, my Elva, pray, —*pray fervently*, that whether you see him here or not, you may hereafter be permitted to welcome his spirit in heaven,—washed, and purified, and sanctified in the blood of Christ. Then no matter what happens in this world."

"I do pray for my father continually;" replied the child; "and I do feel very sure that he will die a Christian. But oh I long to see him now; and to speak to him of the Lord Jesus: and I want to speak to him about you too, dear mother. But I do not think I shall live to do so. I feel as if the angels were always round me now, waiting to carry my soul to God; and sometimes when I am half asleep, I think I hear the rustling of their wings, and the sound of their sweet voices whispering to me to come and live with them; and I seem to see their soft bright eyes shining on me so kindly through the darkness. Oh, mother dear! if it was not for leaving you alone I should be so glad,—so very glad to go."

"Praised be God that you do feel this, my dearest;" said her mother. "It will be my joy and comfort, as long as I live, to remember your faith and love, and to know that if I

depart in the same faith, and feel the same love to my Saviour, I shall certainly join you in that blest place, where 'there is no more pain, neither sorrow, nor crying,' and where we shall never part again for ever."

"Oh, that will be great joy, mother!" exclaimed Elva; "I will think of that, and try to forget how much I wish to see my father now; and I will say, 'God's will be done.' I am very weary, and will go to sleep; and, perhaps, before the sun sets you could take me down once more to the shore. I should like to look at the sun going down over the mountains; and perhaps, perhaps we might see a boat coming up the gulf. I should die so happy if I could see my father!"

While she was yet speaking, Elva closed her heavy eyes, and sank into a deep and quiet sleep; and her mother sat motionless by her side, and watched her slumbering features. But Vivia's soul was lifted up to God in strong supplications for strength to bear the trial that now seemed to approach so very near. The child did not awake for some time; and then she seemed so calm and still that her mother did not disturb her by proposing to carry her

to the beach, and she hoped that the wish was forgotten. But soon Elva turned to her, and said—

"Are you too much tired, dear mother, to carry me to my favourite spot?—or will you ask one of the native women to do so? I wish exceedingly to go there this evening. It will be the last time, I think."

"I will carry you myself, my own Elva. No other hand but mine shall touch you. I feel strong,—yes, very strong now; for God supports me."

She took up the little wasted form, which was now scarce heavier than that of an infant, and bore it to the spot that Elva loved; the spot where she had bade farewell to her nurse, and from whence she could look to a great distance down the gulf. Neither Vivia nor Elva spoke for a long time; for both were deeply absorbed in their own thoughts and feelings. The sun was declining towards the western hills, but before it sank behind them it was obscured by a dark mass of clouds, and the wind began to rise as if announcing a coming storm. Vivia proposed to return home, fearing that a chill might hasten the event which she felt too

surely was not far distant; but Elva begged to stay, and she seemed to feel such a keen delight in watching the clouds as they hurried across the sky, and listening to the moaning of the wind, and the dashing of the waves upon the beach, that her mother could not deny her in what was, perhaps, her last wish. She rose, however, from the ground; and, wrapping the child in a mantle, she slowly paced the shore, and looked continually with an anxious gaze over the now agitated waters of the gulf.

It was a gloomy evening. The sun sank down behind a heavy bank of clouds, and the sound of the sudden gusts of wind that came from the mountain range, mingled with the distant murmur of thunder, fell sadly on Vivia's ear. The wretched mother wildly paced the desolate shore, and her heart was at that moment as desolate as the scene around her. No sound broke on her straining ear save the rushing wind, and the dull, monotonous plash of the receding tide, and the short, quick breathing of her suffering child, who lay so still and motionless in her arms, that, but for that dear sound, she would have deemed that

the last tie which held her own afflicted soul to earth was already broken;—the last being that had been left to comfort her on earth, had already been snatched away to join the happy company of the blessed ones in Heaven. She would have turned her steps towards her lonely home, but again Elva spoke, and softly exclaimed—

"Do not go back to the hut yet, dear mother, I feel happy here; and I hope,—yes, I feel sure, that my father is coming soon."

So Vivia continued to pace the shore; and when the shades of evening fell on the troubled waters, and she could no longer discern distant objects, she listened; and once she thought she heard the measured sound of approaching oars. Her heart beat convulsively, but she did not speak; she paused a moment, but it was only to find that the sound she heard was but the rolling of the pebbles as a heavy wave fell back into the ocean.

"Ah!" she murmured faintly, "can there be any consolation for a spirit so sorely tried as mine? Can any ray of cheering light break into a soul so encompassed with the darkest clouds of sorrow?"

Yes, Vivia, yes! There is *strong* consolation for all who look to "the hope set before them in Christ Jesus."

Vivia hastened her steps. Her soul was dark and troubled, like the waters that rolled by her side. She gazed with wild intensity through the gathering gloom, in the faint hope of descrying the expected succour: and, as she gazed, the thick clouds to the north parted, and one bright star appeared between their dark masses, and was beautifully reflected on the surface of the water. The image was broken, but it was clear and brilliant. So, in that moment of utter misery and desolation, did one bright, cheering beam break on the heavy-laden soul of Vivia; and its light gilded even the lowest depth of her sorrows; and its image was reflected on her troubled heart. It was a *believing* glimpse of *the love of God in Jesus Christ* that dispelled the gathering gloom of despair and doubt, and enabled Vivia to say in sincerity, and almost in resignation, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good. . . . . For He doth not *willingly* afflict or grieve the children of men."

God be praised for this never-failing source

of strength and comfort which is the position of the faithful Christian! *Without* such a confidence in the wisdom and love of his Heavenly Father, how often would he be "of all men most miserable:"—*With* it he may, indeed, be bowed down with sorrow, and sorely tried with temptation, but he can never be in *despair:*—"and as his days, so shall his strength be!"

"Let us go home now, my child," she said gently to Elva. "The evening is growing damp and chilly, and I wish to read God's Word to you, and to pray with you before you fall asleep.

"Yes, mother, we will go now," replied the child, and a deep-drawn sigh heaved her little breast. "He will not come to-night;—and it will be too late to-morrow."

They soon reached their hut, and Vivia gave the child such simple refreshment as she was able to procure for her, and then laid her in her bed, and knelt down beside her to read and pray; hoping that, while thus the child's attention was engaged, she would forget her disappointment, and fall asleep. But there was no more sleep for Elva on earth, except

the sleep of death:—and Vivia saw, with unutterable anguish, that that deep sleep would soon close the eyes of her darling. The signs of approaching death could not be mistaken. The heavy breathing, the altered voice, the wandering thoughts, and incoherent sentences, all showed that the immortal soul was about to forsake its earthly tenement, and was already struggling to be free.

Vivia sought for no assistance:—she saw that all human help was vain. She desired no witness to the coming scene;—no spectator to her grief. There is a sorrow that knows no words:—it is too deep for utterance. The heart then seeks no sympathy on earth, but turns to the "Man of Sorrows,"—to him who was "acquainted with grief" on earth, and now knows all his people's afflictions, and sees all their tears. And such was Vivia's sorrow in that dark hour. She sat and gazed on the little sufferer,

> Oh, even with *such* a look, so fables say,
> The mother ostrich fixes on its egg,
> Till that intense affection
> Kindles its light of life*.

And the child looked into her mother's eyes;

* Southey.

yes, into her mother's soul;—so sweet, so touching, so penetrating was the gaze of those soft dark eyes, from which the light of earth was fast fading away, and where the light of Heaven already began to shine. Still, though the young spirit was on the threshold of eternity, its strongest earthly affection remained as warm as ever; and Elva's little heart clung fondly to her mother. Her faintly whispered words were words of love and anxiety for her; and in death she thought of her mother's sorrows, and prayed for her future happiness.

"Tell my father how I loved him," she softly murmured. "And tell him that I die happy, because I believe that he will love you again, dear mother; and that he will also love the Lord Jesus, and come to live where I am going, and where the angels dwell. I think I see them now;—they are beckoning me away;—and it is all light up above. But round me it is growing dark;—very dark."

The little dying child passed her wasted hands over the face of Vivia, as she leaned towards her to catch her faint accents; and her slender

fingers were wetted with the tears that trickled down that woe-worn mother's countenance.

"I do not see you, dearest mother," she whispered; "where are you? I know you never leave your Elva. Yes . . . . yes . . . . you are always near me. God bless you!"

Vivia strove to speak; but the words died away unuttered. She could only press the child to her throbbing,—breaking heart, in silence.

"Who was it called me, mother? I come, —I come!" cried Elva in a clear distinct voice: and oh! such a smile illumined those faded, but still lovely features. It was a smile from Heaven reflected in her eyes. Her arms were stretched eagerly forward, and clasped in a dying grasp around the neck that was bent over her. It was a long,—a close embrace:— but it slackened:—the arms fell, the head rested on its pillow,—the eyelids closed over those dear eyes. One word was faintly uttered:—it was "*Mother*;"—and one long-drawn sigh followed;—and that form, lately so full of beauty and life and intelligence, was

now a deserted tenement of clay. The redeemed infant spirit passed away, and rose to brighter regions, and into the presence of *that Friend* whose love surpasses *even that of a Mother.* And Vivia was *alone!*

CHAPTER VI.

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall;
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past;
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast;
And the day is dark and dreary.

Be still, my heart, and cease repining;—
Behind the clouds the sun is shining;—
Thy fate is the common fate of all;
Into each life some rain must fall;
Some days must be dark and dreary.

LONGFELLOW.

There's a silver lining to every cloud.—*Old Irish Proverb.*

VIVIA was alone;—alone with death, in that solitary hut. What a stillness,—what a heavy, oppressive stillness was around her! It weighed upon her heart, and she neither moved nor wept. Her torch burned out, and the light of

coming day broke into that silent chamber, before the bereaved mother was recalled to a full consciousness of the nature of the blow which had fallen upon her, and had stunned her spirit. But then the rosy beams of the rising sun fell on Elva's marble features, and seemed to light them up with life; and the fresh breeze blew in through the open casement, and lifted the bright golden curls that hung around that sweet face and neck,—and Vivia thought the sleeper smiled. Passionately she fell on her knees; and, bending over the motionless form, imprinted a long, fervent kiss on those cold lips. The icy coldness struck to her heart, and sent a shudder through her frame. *Now* she knew that Elva was dead, and would never more return her caresses, or reply to her words of love! The child had been her treasure;—the very sunshine of her soul, amid all the clouds of sorrow that had overshadowed her desolate path. That sunshine was gone; and, for awhile, *all* was dark around her, and sorrow's deep waters passed heavily over her soul.

Was any drop of bitterness wanting to Vivia's cup of woe in that sad hour? Yes, *remorse*

was not mingled in that cup; the barbed arrow of *self-reproach* was not rankling in her broken heart. Her day was indeed a dark and dreary one,—so dark that the *eye of flesh* could discern no ray of light which could break in through the heavy cloud of sorrow by which she was shrouded. But did Vivia perceive no light? Yes,—the night of despair passed away, and "the day-spring from on high" came to visit her tried spirit; and to her *eye of faith*, though all was gloom *around*, there was yet light *above*. A way was open to heaven; and thither she turned her meek, confiding gaze, and uplifted her trusting, loving heart.

"The Lord gave!" she exclaimed aloud, "and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

And as she uttered these words in the sincerity of Christian faith, a heavenly comfort descended into her troubled breast, like the refreshing dew on the dry and thirsty ground; and tears,—tears that were not *all* of bitterness,—fell from her eyes. She looked on the serene features and tranquil form that lay stretched before her; and she thanked God

that the trials and sufferings of her precious child were over for ever.

> She *knew* she was with Jesus!
> And she asked her not again.

Gently she composed the limbs, and arranged the flowing hair of the form still so dear to her; and, with a trembling hand, she cut off some of the golden ringlets, and laid them in her bosom. Then she proceeded to make all the necessary preparations for the interment which were in her power, resolving not to demand the aid of her rude, kind neighbours, until it was indispensable to perform the last melancholy office. In this, her sad and lonely occupation, Vivia was calm; so calm that the casual observer would not have detected the load of grief that was pressing on her heart; but those who knew her well might have seen by the compression of her lip, and the fixed, unchanging expression of her eye, that she was making a very strong effort in thus mastering her feelings,—an effort that could not be long sustained.

All was completed, and Vivia again sat down by the little corpse, and tried to fix her eyes

and her mind on the words of holy inspiration and comfort, which were contained in her imperfect copy of God's Word. The attempt was unsuccessful. The volume fell on her knees, and her tearful eyes rested on the loved features, which had now assumed much of their natural expression.

A voice broke on her ear, and startled her from her deep, still musing. What voice?—and whence came it?—Surely it was the creation of her own over-wrought fancy! But it spoke again,—and louder! It was approaching the hut,—and footsteps were audible, coming in the direction of the gulf. Oh, Vivia! nerve your heart! for joy is harder to bear than sorrow! A manly form passed rapidly by the window; and, as Vivia sprang to her feet, uttering a faint cry, Marcus stood at the open door of the chamber.

One quick glance told him the tale of woe; and the next moment his wife was pressed to his beating heart. Words were not made to tell the varied and agitating feelings of the hour that succeeded that meeting. But when the first tumult of joy, and grief, and surprise, had somewhat subsided, what was the abiding sentiment

of Vivia's heart? Gratitude,—deep, fervent gratitude for the unexpected, and undeserved mercy so graciously vouchsafed to her: and shame at the weakness of her faith in the goodness of her *prayer-hearing* God, and at the deadness of her hope for the fulfilment of His promises.

"Elva's faith was stronger than mine?" she exclaimed. "Oh that she had but lived to see her blessed hope so soon realized!"

Long did the bereaved parents gaze on all that remained to them of their only child; and long did Marcus listen, with deep emotion, to Vivia's narrative of her illness and death, and of all that had passed between them in their hours of lonely intercourse, which had given such strong evidence of her blessed state of mind, and of the ripeness of her infant spirit for entering into the joys of heaven. In this detailed account the father tried to find consolation for the bitter shock he had endured. He tried to think of his little Elva as a rejoicing angel before the throne of her Redeemer; but he deeply felt the absence of her sweet smile, and her joyous voice, which had become so dear to him during his brief acquaintance with his child at

Carthage. And what added a sting to all his sorrowful feelings, was the reflection that, *humanly speaking,* his own conduct had caused the death of one whom he loved so much, and mourned so sincerely. And all that Vivia had suffered too! All the days and nights of lonely grief which that lovely and affectionate being had endured; and of which the deep, sad traces were but too visible on her altered form and features! All this was *his work;*—all this was the fruit of his bigotry and prejudice. How could a life of devoted love ever atone to her for the heavy and irremediable injuries he had inflicted on her? And how could he ever prove his sense of the undeserved mercy of his God and Saviour, in calling him out of his sinful state of blindness, and showing him that the way of life and happiness, was the very way which he had so long persecuted even to the death; and to oppose which he had acted so cruelly and madly towards the beings who were dearest to him on earth? The veil,—the thick veil of gross idolatry,—was at length removed from his eyes; and henceforth he was resolved to "follow the Lord fully;" and to endeavour to shew the depth of his repentance, and the

sincerity of his faith, by his unwearied efforts to promote the cause of the once-despised Nazarene; and to ensure the happiness of his much-injured wife.

How perfect would that happiness now have been, had it but pleased the Lord to spare the little Elva to witness and to share it! But she was gone where care and sorrow are unknown, and where happiness is always perfect, because holiness is there universal: and her mourning parents were compelled to make the final preparations for burying their loved-one "out of their sight." The absence of Lucretia was explained; and Marcus summoned his attendants, one of whom was Rufus, from the hut of the chieftain, whether he had sent them as soon as he had ascertained the abode of Vivia. With their assistance a little grave was dug amongst the shrubs and creepers that surrounded the hut, and which it had been the delight of Elva to tend and train. As soon as the kind-hearted natives were made aware of the death of the lovely little stranger, they assembled in silent and sympathizing groups round the hut, and watched the sad funeral preparations. At length Marcus went into the hut; and again, after a

while, came forth, bearing in his arms the body of his child, over which Vivia had thrown a large white veil. The grief-worn mother followed closely, and with faltering steps: but no tear fell from her eye; no sound of sorrow proceeded from her lips. She was as pale as the corpse she followed; but a holy serenity and resignation sat on her calm, beautiful countenance; and the savage spectators gazed on her with looks of reverence and admiration.

Marcus knelt by the grave, and Vivia knelt beside him; and he was about to commit the beloved remains, "dust to dust, — ashes to ashes,—in the *sure and certain* hope of a joyful resurrection," when he was interrupted by a movement among the hitherto motionless spectators. All pressed forward, as if impelled by one desire; and intelligibly expressed their wish to be permitted once more to look on the child, before its beautiful form should be hidden from their eyes for ever. Vivia raised the veil; and as the earnest and affectionate gaze of these simple natives was fixed on the clay-cold features, which they had loved to look upon when beaming with health and joy, tears fell from many a dark eye, and the grief of the

children for the fate of their favourite little playfellow was no longer to be suppressed. With all the vehemence of their race they broke forth into wild cries, and sobs, and exclamations of sorrow, that wrung the heart of Vivia and her husband.

Rufus and the chief employed all their efforts to put a stop to this untimely exhibition of uncontrolled feelings, which they saw was overpowering all Vivia's powers of endurance; but ere they could restore silence, and remove the excited spectators from the grave, a cry, wilder than any that had been uttered, pierced Vivia's ears, and caused her hastily to raise her sinking head. As she did so, Lucretia rushed from the receding crowd of spectators, and threw herself in anguish by the side of the grave.

"Oh!" she cried, while her voice was broken by sobs,—"is she gone indeed? Do I come back only to find the blessed child a cold, senseless corpse? Woe is me that ever I left her, and lost the sad satisfaction of nursing her to the last!"

She stooped and kissed the unconscious face that lay so still and calm upon its father's arm;

and it was not until she looked up towards heaven to invoke the blessing of her imaginary deities, that she became conscious of that father's presence.

"And are you here?" she exclaimed, in wild surprise. "I have sought you at Carthage, to bring you to your dying child, and now I find you by her grave. It is fitting that *you* should lay her there," she added, with bitterness; for grief had overpowered her, and she was unable to control her wounded feelings. — "It is fitting that *you* should come at last to lay her there;—you, whose cruelty has caused her death!—You should have come sooner, and have saved her precious life."

"Peace! Lucretia," said a mild, manly voice; and at the same time a powerful hand seized the arm of the excited nurse, and drew her from the grave. "Intrude not your ungoverned feelings upon the sorrow of these afflicted parents; and least of all give utterance to anger and reviling at such a moment."

It was Octavius who spoke. It was Octavius who pressed his now weeping sister to his breast, and grasped the offered hand of Marcus. A pause ensued;—a long pause,—during which

Vivia recovered her holy composure; and the saint-like expression of her finely-chiseled features returned. Again she and her husband knelt by the grave; and, while Marcus gently placed the little corpse in its last, cold bed, Octavius offered up a simple but fervent prayer, and blessed the name of the Good Shepherd who had thus early removed one of the lambs of His fold from the trials and temptations of this world, and taken her to rest in His bosom for ever.

Octavius was entirely ignorant of the change that had taken place in his brother-in-law. He attributed the softened expression of his countenance merely to the influence of grief and natural affection. But what was his surprise at hearing the voice of Marcus join distinctly in the conclusion of his prayer, and utter the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a tone of affectionate reverence! He looked at Vivia, and in the heavenly expression of her upturned eyes, and the sweet placidity that, even in that trying moment, reigned on her features, he thought he read the confirmation of a hope which yet he scarcely dared to entertain. He spoke not; but assisted Marcus in arranging

the narrow mound of earth, over which the natives came silently forward, and strewed handsful of the sweetest and fairest flowers; and then all dispersed, and left what had so lately been one of God's loveliest handiworks to the solitude and decay of the grave.

Vivia entered into her chamber; and there, alone with her God, she knelt long by the empty couch of her lost treasure. Then she arose, calm and resigned, and even with a thankful heart; and she joined her husband and brother in the outer apartment. Marcus had already repeated to Octavius all that he had rapidly told to Vivia of the story of his conversion: but every minute particular of his residence in Rome was now asked for, and attentively listened to by his wife, whose grateful heart was lifted up in praise to Heaven for every proof of the mercy and the love which had arrested her beloved husband in his course of ambition and worldliness, and made him a chosen vessel unto the Lord.

The joy and satisfaction of Octavius at the change which had been so wonderfully brought about in his friend and brother-in-law, and at the prospect of future peace and happiness

which now appeared for his beloved and much-tried sister, were only less than those which Vivia herself experienced; and which, for a time, almost diverted her thoughts from her recent sad bereavement, and all the touching incidents connected with her darling Elva's illness and death. But it was only at short intervals that this blessed forgetfulness was as yet granted to the heart-stricken mother. Ever, as she sat by her adored husband, and held his hand in both her own,—and looked up into his fine, expressive countenance, as if to assure herself that his presence was no delusion of her fevered brain, and listened to his words of Christian faith and Christian feeling,—and a smile arose on her pale lip, and lighted up her sunken eye,—a thought of Elva would return: and then the smile would fade away, and a tear would glisten in that down-cast eye,—for she remembered that Elva would never gaze with looks of love on her father's face,—Elva would never on earth hear her father's voice confess the Saviour in whom her own young heart had trusted so confidingly. Vivia could restrain the outward expression of her feelings, and even hide from the quick eye of Marcus the

depth of the wound that had been inflicted on her heart; but she did not feel that wound the less acutely; and years must pass over her head, should years of life be allotted to her, ere the memory of all that she had suffered, and all that she had lost, could fade from her spirit. Joy had so long been a stranger to her breast, that the sense of happiness which she enjoyed in the restoration—the blessed restoration, of her husband's presence and affection, was overpowering to her. She could not realize it; she could not bear it; and, exhausted with all that she had gone through that day, and with long previous suffering and fatigue, she was compelled to retire to rest, and leave Marcus and Octavius, assisted by Lucretia, to make such preparations as were necessary for her removal the following day from her place of banishment.

Marcus had engaged the vessel in which he had performed his voyage from Rome, to wait at Hippo-Zarytus, in order to convey him, and (as he had then hoped) his wife and child, to Carthage; and he had also retained the boat and her crew, which had brought him up the gulf; so that there would be no difficulty in

removing Vivia at once, notwithstanding her weakness, and unfitness for any great exertion or fatigue.

The next morning Marcus repaired early to the chieftain of the tribe of rude natives, among whom his high-born wife had dwelt so long; and, after thanking him for the courtesy and kindness which she had experienced both from him and his subjects, and explaining to him that his charge was about to be taken from him, he requested him to afford to him and Octavius the necessary assistance for making a strong and durable fence round the hallowed spot that contained the remains of his lost child. The request was readily acceded to; and the Chief, with his own hands, helped to plant a strong lattice of canes, and to deck the little enclosure with flowering plants and shrubs, which he promised should be carefully watched and tended.

When the work was completed Marcus led his wife to the spot, and together they knelt, and wept, and prayed, beside the grave of their lost treasure. It was a moment of bitter anguish, and yet of deep consolation to Vivia.

She was now happy,—most happy,—as a wife. All that her heart had ever dared to hope, and more, was granted to her; but she was desolate as a mother. The first and greatest of all earthly blessings was restored to her; but she had lost that sweet object of her care and love which had for so many long months and years cheered the loneliness of her married life; and which had latterly been to her the only source of earthly joy and comfort. Could the dear memory of Elva ever fade from her heart? No; the Lord might bless her home with other children, perhaps as fair and as intelligent as Elva; but none could ever be to her what Elva had been;—and none could ever fill up the sad aching void that Elva's death had left in her heart. She leaned her head on the little turf-covered grave; and O her tears fell fast on the now fading flowers that strewed it; fit emblems of the sweet flower that lay fading beneath them. But the spirit! Oh, the *ransomed spirit,*—was not there; and Vivia raised her head from the grave, and looked up into the clear blue sky, and thought of Elva as a rejoicing angel before the throne of God and the Lamb,—and her tears ceased to flow.

Then she rose; and, supported by her husband and her brother, and followed by Lucretia, she walked with trembling steps to the shore, where the boat awaited them; and where the inhabitants of the village had assembled to bid farewell to one who had appeared to them as a visitant from a higher world, (so far was she removed from them by her beauty, her dignity, and her refinement;) and whose gentleness and sorrows had yet attracted their love and pity in no common degree. At first Vivia did not notice them, for they stood respectfully aloof; and she was absorbed in retracing the feelings of that last sad, gloomy evening,—when she had paced that dreary shore, carrying in her arms the fairy form that now slept a long and quiet sleep beneath the green turf. She looked up and down the beach, and fixed her eyes mournfully on the spot which had always been Elva's favourite place of rest. Then raising them to Heaven, she softly murmured; "My child, do you see me now? Is your blessed spirit made yet more joyous by seeing your parents united, and knowing that it is not for time only, but for *eternity?* God grant it!"

Then she turned towards her husband, who was deeply moved at this involuntary expression of her feelings and her hopes; and intimated that she was ready to enter the boat. But she was detained awhile by the natives, who now crowded around her, and sought to cheer her by the simple display of their sympathy, and by their offerings of fruit and flowers. Vivia was glad to escape from this well-meant, but affecting scene; and soon she was moving rapidly over the waters of the gulf, and watching the receding forms of the dark natives, as they stood waving their hands on the shore that recalled such recollections of poignant grief, and of unutterable joy.

CHAPTER VII.

Thine image is before me now,
  All angel as thou art:
Thy gentle eye, and guileless brow,
  Are graven on my heart.
And when on living forms I gaze,
Memory the one loved form pourtrays:—
  Ah! would it ne'er depart!
And they alone are fair to me,
Who wake a livelier thought of thee.

Oft, too, the fond familiar sound
  Is present to mine ear;
I seem, when all is hushed around,
  Thy thrilling voice to hear.
Oh! I could dream thou still wert nigh,
And turn, as if to breathe reply:—
  The waking—how severe!
When on the sickening soul must press
The sense of utter loneliness!—DALE.

THERE was joy in the house of Horatius on the day that followed Vivia's departure from the place of her banishment; for on that day the beloved daughter and sister was restored to her parents and her brethren; and restored also to liberty, and happiness, and

domestic peace. But there was sorrow too; for she returned a childless mother, and the light steps, and the ringing laugh of the little cherished Elva were heard no more echoing through the marble halls, and gladdening the hearts to which her presence had been as sunshine. Dear and valued friends came to welcome back the exile; and whose welcome was so sweet to Vivia's ears as that of Marcella and her saintly father, Numidicus! They were again residing at Carthage, as a temporary cessation of persecution rendered it no longer dangerous for professed Christians to appear in that city. And, to the unspeakable joy and gratitude of Vivia, they were now the chosen friends and constant companions of her mother; for Portia's growing faith had overcome her fears, and she had declared herself a disciple of Christ, and had become a member of His visible church by baptism.

Of all the family of Horatius, once noted in Carthage for their attachment to the false religion of their country, none retained that attachment but Horatius himself. None bent the knee to stocks and stones, but the father of the family; and none offered sacrifices to

demons except he who should have been the priest, as well as the master, of the household; and whose duty it was, with Joshua, to declare "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The obstinate adherence of Horatius to the worship of the gods of the heathen when all the rest of his family had been brought to a knowledge of the true God, and His son Jesus Christ, was naturally a source of deep and constant regret to his wife and his children; but it did not diminish their mutual attachment, or cause any discord or bitterness to arise in their domestic intercourse. Both Octavius, and his younger brother Julius, had endeavoured for a long time after the period of Vivia's banishment, to bring their father over to the true faith, and conquer his ancient and fatal prejudices by argument and persuasion. But they had found both means equally ineffectual; and Portia, though she dared to confess her own sincere faith in Christ, was too timid to attempt to influence her husband's mind on the important point; and therefore, by tacit consent, the subject which was uppermost in their thoughts, was seldom discussed in the senator's presence. But other and

more powerful means were not neglected. Both the mother and her sons had learnt by experience that conversion of heart is the Lord's work, and His work alone: and though they were ready and anxious to use every outward means in their power, which might possibly incline the heart of Horatius towards the Saviour whom they loved; yet they did not depend on such external means. They trusted in the grace and mercy of their God: and daily their fervent and united prayers were presented before His throne, in behalf of him whose idolatry was now the only real source of grief to their happy circle.

The long-deserted dwelling of Marcus was soon prepared for the reception of his wife, and thither they removed from her paternal home, in the humble hope of there enjoying years of peace and domestic happiness: but knowing well that it was not their "continuing city," and that their affections must not be "*set*" on any, even the most blameless, and the most sanctified, of earth's passing blessings. They were possessed of all that this world has to give; and they endeavoured to "use it all as not abusing it;" ever remembering that "the

fashion of this world passeth away;" and that true wisdom consists in "laying up treasures in heaven," which can never fade, and never fail.

The house of Marcus, once the bitter persecutor of Christ and His followers, was soon known among the Christians of Carthage as the chief resort of the believers in that city. Thither the rich repaired for Christian worship, and Christian communion with the heroic and well-known Vivia, and her sincere and high-minded husband: and thither also the poor resorted, to seek that temporal help, and spiritual counsel which were never denied them. But all this was done secretly: for although it was not permitted to the magistrates to apprehend or punish Christians merely because they were known to be such, or to the heathen populace to insult or injure them, so long as they made no public demonstrations of their offensive faith; yet all assemblages of Christians were strictly forbidden; and any new conversions, especially among the upper classes of society, were regarded with the utmost jealousy and displeasure. The change which had taken place in the religious sentiments of Marcus was therefore

not made known to any of his pagan friends and acquaintances; least of all was it confided to his fierce and bigotted father, Fabius. And as the delicate health of his wife, and the recent death of his child, afforded him a just pretext for leading a life of great retirement, no suspicion was entertained that he was less the enemy of Christianity, and less the devoted adherent of the national gods, than he had ever shewn himself in former times.

The accession of their old and valued friend to the ranks of the soldiers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a source of very sincere joy to the young disciples, Secundulus and Claudius Saturninus. Their faith was strengthened and confirmed by that of Marcus; and their courage and resolution to follow their Redeemer "through good report, and evil report," whithersoever He might lead them, were greatly fortified by the pious exhortations, and the calm determination of the very man who had so lately been a terror to the Church; and whose undaunted character had been chiefly displayed in the unshrinking activity and cruelty with which he had persecuted the brethren.

The marriage of Octavius and Marcella had

been arranged to take place a few weeks after the period of Vivia's unexpected return to Carthage; and the prospect of having the presence of her most valued friend on this occasion added much to the pleasure with which the betrothed bride made the necessary preparations for the approaching ceremony, and the change in her future life. This change, however, was not to be so great as that which usually occurs on such occasions; for Marcella was not at first to leave her father's roof; and his simple dwelling was merely arranged and decorated so as to give suitable accommodation to the young married couple.

These arrangements, and the happiness of her friend and her brother, tended much to divert the mind of Vivia from her own deep grief; but nothing could banish the memory of the loved and lost Elva, or check the starting tear, or the bursting sigh, that rose as each familiar scene recalled to the mother's heart the image of that sweet form, now mouldering in the dust. For her husband's sake she strove to be cheerful; and the effort was, in itself, useful to her. Nor was she insensible to the many blessings which were left to her; and chiefly that best

and most unlooked for blessing,—the return of her husband, as an altered man, and the restoration of all his affection. This was happiness, unutterable happiness; and if the memory of the past did often cast a cloud over its brightness, it was but a passing cloud: and Vivia could look forward to the future with joyful hope, and perfect confidence. And should her hopes of earthly joy and peace be disappointed by adverse circumstances, still she knew that heavenly joy and peace were the inalienable inheritance of the believer; and this inheritance she also knew that she should one day share with her beloved husband and her angel child. This hope and confidence shed a calm and heavenly expression over her beautiful features, and added a charm to her loveliness which struck all her former friends and acquaintances very forcibly. It was the expression of that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," and which is the blessed privilege of the Christian, and of the *Christian alone.*

The day appointed for the marriage of Octavius and Marcella arrived; and the ceremony was performed privately, but with all the usual observances of the ancient Christian Church.

It was the general custom among the primitive believers, for two years to elapse between the rite of espousal and that of marriage. But this was not a law of the Church, it was merely a common observance; and it was dispensed with in the present case, as the circumstances of those troublous and uncertain times rendered it desirable that the union should take place during the season of comparative peace and security, which was, just then, accorded to Christ's "little flock."

A few Christian friends assembled at the house of Numidicus, and repaired, with the bride and her father, to the church among the ruins. There they were met by Octavius and all his family, not excepting even his Pagan father; whose affection for his son, and sincere regard and respect for the Presbyter and his exemplary daughter, led him to lay aside his prejudices, and consent to be present at this solemn Christian rite. Felicitas, and her husband, Revocatus, were also there, as loved and honoured guests, notwithstanding their humble condition as the slaves of the proud pagan senator, Fabius. The intimacy which Marcella had formed with Felicitas at the time

of her father's trial and martyrdom, and of her own deep desolation, had ripened into a sincere and cordial friendship; for the slave was not only a pious and enlightened Christian, but she was also, by birth and education, a lady, and of cultivated mind and manners. Revocatus was, in all these respects, the equal of his wife; and the diligence and fidelity with which they both performed the duties of their present servile position in society, only raised them the higher in the estimation of their Christian friends. The liberation of this excellent couple from slavery was a thought that quickly struck the generous mind of Marcus, and became a fixed resolve. But he was well aware of the difficulties which he should have to contend with, in obtaining their freedom from his father, who valued their services very highly, and he also felt the necessity of concealing from him that he took any peculiar interest in the fate of the slaves. They, and also the family of Horatius, had reached the sacred spot among the ruins of old Carthage, in detached parties, and by circuitous routes; for it was needful, even at that time, to avoid in any way exciting the suspicions of the

heathen government, or of the heathen population.

The assembled party descended the rugged staircase, and entered the gloomy subterranean church, which was dimly lighted up with torches, and where the venerable Bishop and his attendants awaited their arrival. How deep was the emotion of Vivia, as she passed the spot where she and her departed child had received the Sacrament of Baptism, and been made members of the visible church of Christ on earth! She had not visited the church since that memorable and blessed day; and it vividly recalled the image of the dear infantine disciple, who had then, in simple sincerity, vowed to be the soldier and servant of the Lord Jesus, and who had now joined the great company of His redeemed in heaven. Could she grieve for the glorious change? Yes, nature grieved; but the renewed heart rejoiced.

The marriage ceremonies immediately commenced. The purple fillet, which was worn by all unmarried women, was unclasped from the head of Marcella by her friend Vivia; and the long, fair hair of the bride fell in glossy curls over her graceful neck, and modest brow.

A large white veil, richly embroidered,—the gift of Portia,—was then thrown over her head, and enveloped her whole person in its transparent folds. Thus attired she stood by the side of her betrothed husband before the bishop, and listened with reverent and devout attention to the pious admonitions which, according to the custom of these olden times, was addressed to the young couple by the officiating minister. The holy communion was afterwards administered to them, and their hands were joined together, when the bishop pronounced them man and wife, and invoked a solemn benediction on them in their new relation. The conclusion of the ceremony was anounced by garlands of flowers being thrown around them, and chaplets placed on their heads, by the hands of Vivia and Felicitas; these flowers, from their sweetness and purity, being intended as emblems of the virtue and innocence of the parties. In this festive attire they returned to the upper ground, and to the cheerful light of heaven; but they did not venture to proceed in the same manner into the city. At the outskirts of the ruins the garlands were removed and concealed, and the procession par-

tially dispersed. Marcella, and her husband and father, repaired to their own dwelling, and the rest of the company took other roads to their respective homes. But they all met again that evening at the house of Numidicus, and closed the day with a marriage feast, which was characterized by the sobriety and temperance that marked every festive meeting of the primitive Christians; while it was enlivened by a flow of cheerfulness, and even of mirth, in which, on suitable occasions, none were more ready to join than that band of believers who were stigmatized by their enemies as stern and austere. It is true they shunned the wild conviviality, and the idolatrous and profane ceremonies, which always attended the festivities of their heathen neighbours, and caused them to end in riot and excess. They excluded from their own social meetings all the boisterous dancing and leaping in which the heathen frequently indulged, especially at marriage feasts, until fatigue and exhaustion compelled them to desist. Neither did they admit at their feasts of the introduction of hired players and buffoons, which formed so favourite a diversion among the Pagans of those dissolute

times. But the Christians were not less cheerful than those who hated them for their virtue, and scoffed at the supposed dullness and severity of their manners. They did not enjoy the natural and social blessings of life the less keenly because their hearts were not "*set on them,*" and on them *alone.* They did not love their friends and relatives the less because they knew that, though they must part from them on earth, they would be reunited to them in a brighter and better world, and renew in the presence of their Saviour the intercourse which sweetened their path in life. No, the spirit of Christianity is the spirit of "joy and peace." The presence of Christ in the soul is the sunshine that gilds every object here, and every hope hereafter. It is the spring and fountain of the only pleasures that never disappoint, and never leave bitterness behind them. It is a foretaste of heaven; and it sheds the rainbow hues of heaven on the common events, and every day objects of life. O *try it,* all you who now doubt its power, and you will find that *true religion* and *true happiness* are synonymous terms!

Such was the blessed experience of many,—

very many, of the primitive Christians; for, generally speaking, their profession of Christianity was sincere, and their faith lively and influential. It was a "living faith," in the true sense of the words; for it gave spiritual life to the possessors of it; and it was manifested in its existence and its growth by an ever increasing "zeal for good works," and earnestness in promoting the honour of God, and the temporal and eternal welfare of their fellow-creatures.

In this company of true believers the Christian matrons were generally the most distinguished by their active benevolence and untiring charity; and for the exercise of these virtues the names of the noble Vivia Perpetua, of Marcella, and of the humble slave, Felicitas, were known and blessed by all the poor, the suffering, and the distressed brethren in Carthage. Nor was their charity confined to the brethren; it extended to the idolators who dwelt around them "in darkness, and the shadow of death"; and many were the instances in which their sympathy and kindness were effectual in at least disarming the prejudices of the objects of their benevolence against the

holy religion which actuated it; while in a few cases their labour of love was richly rewarded by their being made the humble instruments of dispensing the seeds of the true faith, and seeing it take root and grow in the unkindly soil of heathen hearts.

But the care of the needy and the afflicted was not left by the primitive Christian Church to the efforts of private benevolence, and private zeal, however active and extensive they might be. The work of charity devolved on the whole community of believers, who regarded it not merely as a duty, but a privilege, to minister to the wants of the poor members of Christ; and even of those who despised His name, but who met with neither succour nor sympathy from the wealthy among their heathen fellow-creatures. The public charity of the Church was exercised in the following remarkable manner. On each Sabbath-day, as soon as the services were brought to a close, the lists of the poor, the aged, the sick, and the helpless, were produced for consideration; and measures for their relief were proposed, and immediately carried into effect; the funds for this purpose being drawn from

the common stock, which the voluntary contributions of the faithful abundantly supplied. It was customary for each member of the congregation to bring forward in turn the case of some brother or sister, which he considered most urgent, and of which he had a personal knowledge; and by whomsoever the case was recommended, or in whatever circumstances the claim was made, it was sure to receive prompt attention, and meet with instant relief. And when the cases of distress in one Christian community happened, from any afflictive cause, to be too numerous for the means of the brethren, an appeal was always made to the benevolence of a richer or less distressed Church, and it was invariably responded to with cheerful liberality*.

* As one instance among many of this spirit of universal charity, we read that in these early times a number of Christians, both men and women, were taken captive in Numidia by a neighbouring horde of barbarians: and the churches to which they belonged, being unable to raise the sum demanded for their ransom, deputies were sent to Alexandria, to solicit the aid of the Christian community in that city. Cyprian, who then presided over the Church as Bishop, no sooner heard the particulars of the distressing case, than he commenced a subscription in behalf of the unhappy slaves, and never relaxed in his efforts until he had collected a sum equal to 800*l.* sterling, which he transmitted to the Numidian Churches, with a letter

The daily meetings of the Christians for prayer and praise, and the reading and expounding of the Holy Scriptures, frequently took place in the private houses of the more opulent among the brethren, when needful caution, or any other reason, rendered it

expressive of the deepest sympathy and Christian love. A still more impressive example of individual self-devotion and charity is also recorded as having occurred in the same age and country of which we are speaking; and it is too remarkably characteristic of the noble and disinterested spirit then prevalent among Christians, to remain unnoticed. During the persecution which was raised by the Vandals in Italy, numbers of Christians, who had been carried away captive into the savage wilds of Africa, were redeemed from slavery and wretchedness by the liberality of a wealthy man named Paulinus. But the sacrifice of his whole princely fortune was inadequate to meet the ransom required for all the captives, and among those whom he was compelled to leave languishing in bonds and misery, was one poor youth, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." In the bitterness of her grief and disappointment this bereaved parent undertook a long and toilsome journey in order to obtain an interview with Paulinus, and endeavour to persuade him to bestow upon her the comparatively small sum that would purchase the liberation of her only child—her only earthly solace and support. With tears of sympathy Paulinus assured her that he had already parted with all his great possessions, and was as destitute as herself: but he declared his readiness to offer himself as a slave in the place of her son, and thus procure his freedom. This strange and most generous resolution he lost no time in executing. He immediately set sail, accompanied by the grateful and wondering mother; and, having reached Africa, he

inexpedient for them to repair in large numbers to the appointed place of public worship. In such cases a room was prepared at the time it was required, and no change was made in its ordinary furniture or decorations. The only preparation which was deemed necessary for these devotional meetings, was the introduction of a covered table, on which a copy of the Scriptures was laid. A couch was placed near it for the presiding minister, and benches for the accommodation of the worshippers; and in these simple sanctuaries the brethren who resided in the neighbourhood assembled daily; and under the shelter of domestic privacy, performed their devotions without offending the popular feelings and prejudices, or openly violating the imperial edicts against public meetings of the Christians, and public demonstrations of their faith.

proceeded to the abode of the native prince in whose service the young captive remained. He offered himself as his substitute; and being readily accepted, the widow and her liberated son returned to their home, and their noble benefactor was left a slave. In this galling condition he continued for some time, until the prince, having discovered his real rank and character, and being struck with admiration at his generosity, set him at liberty without a ransom.—BINGHAM.

The large and commodious dwelling of Marcus was one of the most favourite resorts of his Christian brethren: for there the highly-esteemed Presbyter, Numidicus, was frequently the officiating priest; there the venerable Bishop was often present, and cheered his flock with his pious and eloquent exhortations; and there the gentle and engaging manners of Vivia, aud the generous kindness of her noble husband, made all their visitors feel at home and happy.

To Julius Satur, and his mother Portia, this was the only place of social Christian resort; for, although Horatius now shewed sorrow rather than anger at the renunciation of the national faith by his whole family, and no longer offered any opposition to their pursuing the mode of worship they had chosen to adopt, yet he would not permit them to make any open or public manifestation of their faith, or to frequent any other assemblies for worship than those which were held at the house of his son-in-law. Nor did they themselves desire to draw any attention to their new religion and mode of life. Julius had already become only too much marked by his public accusation as a

Christian: and all the sorrow which had so long oppressed the family on Vivia's account was too recent, and too deeply felt, to suffer any of her friends and relatives to be rash or imprudent in needlessly proclaiming their conversion to the religion denounced by the law. Thankfully all the believing members of that family enjoyed the respite from anxiety and active persecution which was so graciously afforded to them; and well did they employ the time of spiritual peace and tranquillity in laying up a store of divine knowledge, and divine strength, for any trials which it might please their covenant, and ever-merciful God yet to lay upon them. How soon such trials might be their lot, or how severe might be their nature, who, in those uncertain days, could presume to guess! It was the manifest duty of every soldier of the great "Captain of our salvation" to buckle on his armour, and see that his weapons of warfare were bright and keen: and this "the Church that was in the house of Marcus" were prompt and diligent to do, by using all the means of grace that were placed in their reach.

One evening when Vivia and Marcella had been long engaged in their customary visits to

the poor and the sick, who were their peculiar charge, they found that the interest of their occupation had beguiled them unconsciously, and that the time for the assembling of their brethren for evening prayer, preparatory to the Sabbath, was already past. They hurried towards Vivia's home, where the meeting was to take place; and, anxious to partake in the devotions of the congregation, they repaired immediately to the apartment dedicated to the sacred purpose; and, softly opening the door, were about to take their place silently among the kneeling company. But an object caught their eyes which at once arrested their steps, and caused an involuntary exclamation to burst from Vivia's lips, while a thrill of deep emotion passed over her frame. She almost deemed the spirit of her departed Elva had returned to bless her astonished gaze; so much did the lovely uplifted countenance, and light graceful form, of a child who knelt by her husband's side, resemble those of the being she had so dearly loved, and still so deeply mourned.

A second glance shewed her that the child was a boy, and a stranger: but the resemblance which his features, and expression of counte-

nance, bore to those of Elva, still struck her, though less forcibly than at first. Who the interesting little stranger could be she was at a loss to conjecture; and kneeling gently down among the congregation, she endeavoured to banish all distracting thoughts and recollections, and to join in spirit and in voice in the pure and fervent supplications which were uttered by Numidicus, and which were not interrupted by her entrance. The service proceeded as usual; and when the concluding psalm was sung by the united voices of the whole assembly, the clear, infantine tones of the stranger boy struck on the ear and heart of Vivia, and brought tears to her eyes. The psalm was one which Elva had loved, and which she had often sung with her during her last sad illness. She felt her affections strongly drawn towards the child, who was very lovely in her eyes, because he "woke a livelier thought" of her whom she had lost.

The loud "Hallelujah" died away, and the parting benediction of the Presbyter succeeded, and then the assembly quietly dispersed. Vivia quickly approached her husband, who was not until that moment aware of her presence; and,

stooping towards the child, who clung affectionately to his hand, she kissed his fair brow with much emotion, and exclaimed;

"Who is this boy, Marcus, who so strongly recalls to me the image of our angel-child? Yes," she added, with a sigh, as she parted the glossy curls from his forehead, and gazed at him tenderly. "Yes, he is young, and fair, and guileless as she was. May his parents never know the grief of being parted from him by death!"

"He has no parents," replied Marcus; "and you and I, my Vivia, must endeavour to supply to him the place of all that he has lost. This is my little Roman friend and instructor, Camillus; and the resemblance which has so much affected you, struck me also when first I beheld him at the house of his grandfather, Zephyrinus. The venerable and excellent Bishop has, during the last month, been called to his heavenly reward; and he has bequeathed to me this boy, as the greatest treasure he possessed on earth. I rejoice, Vivia, in such a proof of my valued friend's confidence and affection; and I hope to prove myself not unworthy of the trust he has reposed in me. I am sure

of receiving your aid and sympathy in consoling the orphan boy, and in leading him onward in the path of holiness in which his grandfather has already taught him to walk."

"I will be a mother to him," answered Vivia, earnestly; and she embraced the gentle boy, down whose cheeks the tears were flowing fast, at the recollection of his recent loss, "I will be a mother to him," she repeated; "and all the care and instruction that I would have lavished on my Elva, if the Lord had spared her to me, shall henceforth be your's, my little Camillus. Will you love me in return?"

The boy looked sweetly up into her face, and smiling through his tears, he took her hand, and replied,—

"Yes, I will love you very much; for you are beautiful, and you look very good. I sometimes dream of eyes like your's, that look on me so kindly, and smile so sweetly, and my nurse tells me that it is my mother who visits me in my sleep. I will try to think that you are my mother now. And the Tribune too; —I loved him at Rome, because he was so kind to me, and talked to me of the Lord Jesus Christ, and protected my grandfather

from the cruel soldiers. I shall always love him."

"You must not call me *the Tribune* any longer, my dear boy," said Marcus kindly. "You must call me *father*, and this beautiful lady *mother;* and this house must be your home,—your happy home, I trust."

"Oh, I shall be very happy here," cried the child. Then suddenly, as if recollecting himself, he exclaimed, "But you told me that you had a little girl about my age. Where is Elva, of whom you talked to me so much at Rome? Shall she be my sister?"

Vivia turned away and wept; and Marcus softly replied,—

"Elva is gone to heaven, my Camillus. God loved her, and took her to Himself; and now she is with the holy angels, in the presence of the Saviour, whom she believed in and loved. She will be your sister there, but she cannot be your conpanion on earth, and you must try to comfort your new mother for her loss."

The conversation was interrupted by Marcella, and Octavius, who approached the boy, and began to talk to him of Rome. Octavius well remembered seeing him at the house of

the Bishop; and Camillus readily renewed his acquaintance with his former friend, and was soon playing wildly with him and Julius through the corridor and wide saloon; so quickly do the tears and griefs of childhood pass away!*

* The death of Zephyrinus, Bishop of Rome, did not really take place until the year 217. He presided over the Church of Rome for twenty years, and was highly respected for the zeal and discretion which he manifested in repressing the heresies which were very frequent during his pontificate; and in maintaining the purity of the faith and the discipline of his clergy. The heresy of the Patripassians was the most troublesome with which he had to contend. The chief of this sect was Praxeas, who only allowed of *one Person* in the Godhead. After much contest with the heresiarch, Zephyrinus at length brought him to submission. He openly expressed his repentance for his own errors, and for the false doctrines which he had promulgated; and submitted to the condemnation and punishment denounced against him by the Bishop.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cease, tempter, cease! I would not live
The scorned of earth, the loathed of Heaven,
For all that Cæsar's hand hath given,
For all that Rome could give.
Since how could pomp, and power, and pride,
Avail to banish from mine eye
The Cross, for which I vowed to die,
The Cross I had denied!
Or teach me, though my limbs were free,
To bear the spirit's slavery?—DALE.

MONTHS passed away. Months of peaceful happiness, such as Vivia's chequered life had never known before. She became the mother of an infant boy; and in the care and attention which he required, and the affection of her adopted child, Camillus, she found so much pleasure, and so much occupation, that the void which Elva's death had left in her heart, was almost filled up, and the remembrance of her lost treasure was softened into a feeling of tender regret for the past, and joyful hope for the future; it had lost its bitterness.

But happiness, for any long continuance, it was not the will of her Heavenly Father that Vivia should enjoy on earth; and soon the calm horizon became black with clouds, and threatening storms arose, to mar the brightness of her prospects.

Hitherto the change in the religion of Marcus had remained unsuspected by his apostate and bigotted father. Fabius knew, indeed, that his son no longer took any part in the persecution of the Christians, and also absented himself from all public heathen ceremonials and festivities. But this alteration in his conduct towards the heretics was to be accounted for by the temporary change which had taken place in the policy of the government towards its Christian subjects, which had put an end to open persecution for the present; and the close ties which connected Marcus with the heroic Vivia, and her Christian brother Julius, rendered his conduct, in avoiding pagan meetings, not surprising to the senator, however much it might displease him. Fabius was also ignorant of the conversion of Octavius, and of his mother; and he believed that they participated in the regret and indignation which were felt

by his old friend Horatius and himself at the increasing influence which the new doctrines continued to gain in society of every rank, and which had so unhappily entered even into their own respective families. He seldom visited at the house of his son, for the presence of Vivia was hateful to him, nor could he conquer the feeling of shame that arose in his breast when he met her calm forgiving glance, and thought of all the grief that he had been mainly instrumental in bringing upon her. For the same reason he avoided the dwelling of Horatius; for there his daughter-in-law was frequently to be met; and there also he was subjected to painful feelings when he encountered his once intended victim, Julius. To this almost entire cessation of social intercourse with his family and connections must be attributed his long-continued ignorance of their change of religion, and mode of life; and it was by a very unexpected event that this change became known to him.

The Emperor had, as we have seen, tried the experiment of merciful treatment towards his Christian subjects, in the hope that when no longer excited by opposition to what he

considered a vain and ostentatious display of courage and obstinacy, their attachment to their new tenets would die away, and the cases of fresh conversion would become of much less frequent occurrence. In this hope he, however, found himself disappointed. The reports from the provinces informed him that the obnoxious faith was spreading not the less rapidly and generally because its progress was less marked by the confiscations, and imprisonments, and deaths, that had formerly followed in its track; and many of his Proconsuls and magistrates, who yearned to shed the blood, and seize on the possessions, of the Christians, and to wreak their vengeance on those whose holy and blameless lives were a continual reproof to their own godless and profligate courses, besought him to resume his former mode of treatment.

Among those who thus sought to rouse again the wrath and cupidity of Severus, the Proconsul Saturninus, and his friend and adviser Fabius, were the most urgent. Little did the latter foresee the grief which he was bringing upon himself!

In consequence of these appeals from his

magistrates, the Emperor changed his line of policy, and determined again to try the harsher measures which were more congenial to his stern and unrelenting disposition. He permitted the search for Christians to be resumed; and declared all assemblages of believers, for purposes of worship, whether public or private, to be illegal, and subject to severe punishment. No sooner did this desired permission reach the magistrates in the different provinces and cities, than they eagerly began to avail themselves of it, and considered it as a license to every act of violence, and depredation, and personal vengeance, that they chose to commit. No crime was too great,—no cruelty too revolting, to be perpetrated under the cloak of zeal for the honour of the gods and the Emperor. The Saints of God were again tormented, but not vanquished.

Fabius did not desire again to bring trouble either upon his son, or upon the house of his old friend, Horatius, by denouncing the believing members of their families. He, therefore, took care that their dwellings should not be invaded by the emissaries of the law; and even went so far as to warn them to secure the

safety of their Christian connections, by prohibiting their attendance at any religious meetings, especially such as were held in the church. To this warning Horatius thankfully gave heed, and he positively forbad either his wife or Julius from holding any public communion with their Christian brethren, while the first burst of persecution and inquiry lasted; and, in obedience to his command, they restricted themselves to their private worship, and to the society of their immediate relatives. But Marcus did not feel himself bound by duty to follow his father's counsel; and he continued not only to hold large meetings of Christians in his own house as usual; but also with Vivia and little Camillus, frequently attended the public services of the church on the Sabbath day, and other special occasions.

One of these occasions was the baptism of his infant son, which he greatly desired should be performed in the midst of the assembled congregation, and in the same spot where Vivia and Elva had received the solemn rite. The evening of the Sabbath was appointed for the purpose, and the Bishop consented to perform the ceremony, while Marcella, and

her father, and husband, were the chosen sponsors. Lucretia,—the faithful and devoted Lucretia,—was still in the service of Vivia, and again acted in the capacity of nurse; and, though she professed to continue a devoted adherent of paganism, and studiously complied with all the prescribed ceremonies of idolatry, yet she no longer indulged in any bitter remarks on the religion of her master and mistress, and even expressed a feeling of horror at the treatment to which their brethren in Christ were again subjected. Vivia, who was warmly attached to her, continued to hope and pray for her conversion, and her hopes were greatly strengthened by the request which Lucretia made to be allowed to carry her infant charge to the Church; thus proving that if she had not received the truth into her own heart, yet her prejudices against it were, at all events, greatly lessened.

The appointed hour arrived, and Marcus and Vivia, attended by Camillus and the nurse and infant, proceeded to the church, where they found the sponsors, and the rest of the congregation, already assembled. The

usual evening service was performed, and the baptismal ceremonies commenced. In the name of the infant, the sponsors pronounced the customary renunciations and vows, and then the requisite immersion took place; and the Bishop, taking the child in his arms, baptised him John Irenæus, "in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Vivia was in the act of receiving back her baptised infant into her arms, and throwing around him the white garment, the emblem of purity, when a confused noise was heard on the stairs;—the door was rudely burst open;—and the Proconsul and Fabius stood before the astonished congregation. There was a pause of a few moments, during which all remained silent and motionless; for the fierce intruders were as much surprised and disturbed as their intended victims could be. Fabius comprehended the whole scene in one brief glance at the striking group that presented itself to his view. He saw and felt the full extent of his misfortune; and he already bitterly regretted the part he had taken in bringing about this renewal of active

persecution. He would have retired, and have drawn back Saturninus with him. But the excited soldiers, who followed them with drawn swords and flaming torches, were not to be restrained, even if the Proconsul should consent, for his friend's sake, to forego the expected act of vengeance.

The guards pressed forward, in spite of every effort, and every remonstrance, that the distracted father could employ. The Bishop, and the most distinguished members of the congregation were immediately seized, for they made no resistance, knowing that all resistance would be worse than useless; and Saturninus, closing the door, proceeded to take down on his tablets, the names of all who were present.

When this was done, he commanded his soldiers to release their captives, and retire from the church; an order with which they most reluctantly complied; for they had expected a license to plunder and ill-treat the hapless Christians, and to drag every one of them to the city dungeons. When these savage men had retired, Saturninus addressed the congregation. He reproached them with

their disloyalty and folly in thus incurring the just wrath of the Emperor by so flagrant a violation of his laws: which, he added, could never be broken with impunity. He reminded them that Severus had tried by indulgence and forbearance to bring them back to their allegiance to him, and their duty towards the gods; but that, finding his mercy had been altogether ineffectual, he had been compelled to adopt harsher measures, and to instruct his magistrates to enforce obedience to his laws, and to punish every breach of them with severity. As regarded those who were known to have professed the Christian religion for a considerable period, and who had, for a long time, been unmolested, he declared his intention of merely enforcing a heavy fine for the present offence; but with the assurance that if they were again detected in the same fault, he should consider it his duty to inflict a much more severe punishment. He then named the sum, a very heavy one, which he proposed to lay on the congregation; and he announced his intention of keeping the Bishop in captivity until it was paid.

He then turned to Marcus and Octavius, and strongly expressed his anger and astonishment at finding two such distinguished officers,—men who had both received personal marks of the favour and confidence of their Emperor, and who had hitherto been marked by their zeal for the national religion and the national glory,—thus becoming the slaves of a base and vulgar superstition, and setting an example of defiance to the laws of their imperial benefactor. As new converts to the Nazarene faith, he declared that they had rendered themselves liable to much heavier penalties than the mere confiscation of their property, or even than imprisonment or banishment. But for the sake of his respected friends, Fabius and Horatius, he intimated his desire to deal leniently with them. He therefore informed them that he should set them at liberty on their promise, as men of honour, to remain in Carthage, and appear before him at his summons. In the mean time he would write to the Emperor, to enquire his will concerning them; and he promised to urge every argument in his power to induce Severus to overlook their first, and, as he trusted, their last offence of the kind.

The young officers attempted no defence. They merely gave the required promise, and Saturninus left the church. He was followed by Fabius, who did not trust himself to speak to his son, but cast on him an earnest look as if imploring him to leave his errors, and return, as he had himself done, to the religion of his country and his ancestors. No sooner had the Proconsul ascended the steps that led to the upper ground, than he dispatched two of his guards to secure the person of the venerable head of the Church, and convey him to prison. The congregation crowded around their beloved Bishop to bid him farewell, to ask his blessing, and to assure him that his captivity should not be prolonged, for that they would purchase his freedom at the sacrifice, if necessary, of all their possessions. The aged but intrepid Christian briefly thanked his flock for this fresh proof of their respect and attachment, and exhorted them to hold fast their faith and confidence to the end; and he was led away by the guards, who uttered scoffs and blasphemies in reply to his prayers and blessings.

After his departure the congregation held a short conference on the best and most expedi-

tious means of raising the sum demanded by the Proconsul, which far exceeded all that they could immediately command. But measures were taken to secure its payment in the course of a few weeks; and for this purpose both Marcus and Octavius agreed to pledge themselves to a considerable amount. Plans for the future conduct of the Church, and for the necessary precautions to be adopted under the present distressing circumstances, were also discussed by the Presbyter, and the principal members of the congregation; while Vivia and Marcella stood apart, and sought to strengthen each other, and to still the anguish of their own hearts, under the prospect of the calamities that now hung over their heads. They could hope for little clemency from Severus, notwithstanding the plausible promises of the Proconsul; and these heroic women who had faced shame and agony, and death, when threatened in their own persons, now for a little while shrunk and trembled at the thought of what might befal their beloved husbands.

Sorrowfully the congregation dispersed, and returned to their homes: and they met no more for public worship during the imprisonment of

the Bishop. But they still continued almost daily to repair in small parties to the houses "where prayer was wont to be made;" and, in these true temples, the God of the Christians was worshipped as fervently, and His Word was read as profitably, and His gospel was preached as effectually, as in the noblest edifice that was ever raised to His honour. Gradually the faith and courage of Marcus and Octavius were shared by their devoted wives, and they learned again to "cast all their cares on Him who *cared for them*," and to await with firmness and resignation the decision of their husbands' fate.

The messenger who had been dispatched by Saturninus to inform the Emperor of the defection of two of his officers from the religion prescribed by the government, returned again to Carthage; and Marcus and Octavius were summoned to the tribunal of the Proconsul.

With regret, either real or assumed, he informed them that the Emperor viewed their offence in a more serious point of view than he had even anticipated, and had positively refused to pronounce their pardon, except on the condition of their making a full recantation of their errors. It was the great object of Severus to

put a stop to the fresh conversions, especially in the army, that were continually taking place; and he was therefore determined to make severe examples of any offenders of this class who might be brought to his notice, in order to deter others from following the same pernicious course. He expressed a hope that both Marcus and Octavius would listen to his paternal advice, and immediately return to their duty; in which case all the past should be forgotten, and he would testify his approbation of their conduct by giving them lucrative and confidential appointments. But should they refuse to comply, and obstinately persist in their heresy, then they must abide the penalties of the law which they had broken.

When Saturninus had thus declared the reply of the Emperor, he delivered to Marcus a private letter from Severus; and waited in silence until he had perused it. It contained a pressing offer of the command of the Prætorian guards, which important office had again become vacant by the death of the Præfect. The emperor addressed Marcus in the most affectionate terms, as his friend and preserver, and besought him earnestly to abandon his

newly-adopted opinions, and be again the brave, the noble Roman soldier, the beloved of Gods and men. But the letter concluded with a threat, in which the fierce nature of Severus was manifested, and in which Marcus read his fate.

He handed the letter to Octavius, and in the calm smile which played over his features as he did so, Saturninus hoped he perceived symptoms of acquiescence with the wishes of the Emperor. In a friendly, persuasive manner, therefore, he addressed him, and asked what reply he was to make to the proposal of his Imperial master?

"Tell him," answered Marcus, without a moment's hesitation, "that I serve a Master whose honours and rewards are as far above all that he can offer, as the heavens are above the earth; and that were I to be so vile as to desert the Captain of my salvation, and prove a traitor to Him who bought me with His blood, the shame that I should ever bear about in my breast would be a living death, an anguish far more severe than any that he can inflict."

Saturninus started. He had not expected such a bold and instant rejection of the direct

offers and entreaties of the Emperor ; and he turned to Octavius, hoping for a more favourable reply. But no; the young men were one in faith, and one in resolution, and Octavius replied in the same spirit as his brother-in-law.

The conversation lasted long; for the Proconsul was sincere in his wish to save Octavius from his impending sentence, and he wished to appear equally so with regard to Marcus, especially as he knew that the Emperor desired their preservation, and would be pleased at every effort he made to persuade them to recant their errors. But in the depth of his cruel and revengeful heart, he exulted in the opportunity which was now afforded him of harrowing the feelings of his old associate, and former friend, Fabius. A secret jealousy had sprung up between these men, for the friendship of the wicked is ever transient; and, though they kept up the appearance of intimacy, and were constantly seen together in public, yet all cordiality was gone, and each suspected the other of having sought to undermine him in the favour of the Emperor by malicious misrepresentations. Nor did they wrong one another by these suspicions; for Fabius would have

rejoiced in the disgrace of Saturninus, to whose dignity and office he aspired to succeed; and the Proconsul discerned the ambitious hopes of the inferior magistrate, and spared no pains to frustrate them. He had therefore felt an inward satisfaction at finding the son of his treacherous friend among the proscribed worshippers of Christ: and in his report to the Emperor, he had, notwithstanding his promises to the contrary, urged every aggravation of the crimes laid to the charge of Marcus, and even reminded Severus that Fabius himself had once been an avowed enemy of the gods, and was now probably but a false friend. With regard to Octavius, he had acted differently; for he bore no enmity to the upright and estimable Horatius; and to his favourable representation of his case, was to be attributed the degree of clemency that was shown towards one of the offenders.

Saturninus employed every argument that occurred to the mind of a worldly and ambitious man, to persuade the young Christians to abandon their heavenly hopes, and save themselves from worldly shame and condemnation, and worldly ruin; and when he found that all

his efforts were unavailing, he summoned Fabius and Horatius, who were waiting anxiously in his private apartments, and desired them to use their influence with their sons, to induce them to accept the clemency of the Emperor.

Fabius was loud and eager in his expostulations, but Horatius was silent. He took the hand of Octavius, and gazed at him with tearful eyes that expressed love and admiration rather than anger; and his son returned his gaze with grateful emotion. Both fathers saw that their sons were not to be moved, and Saturninus perceived it also. He again took up the Emperor's letter which lay beside him, and read the sentence, which he declared he was commanded to execute without delay, if the offenders should prove obdurate. In the case of Octavius, this sentence was immediate and irrevocable dismissal from the Roman army,—a heavy fine,—and banishment to the Emperor's recently conquered dominions in Armenia.

The noble and high-spirited young man bowed his head in token of submission. He uttered not a word of remonstrance, for he knew that it would be of no avail, and he had

learnt to look on all events as coming from the hand of God; and to regard it as the Christian's lot, and the Christian's privilege, to suffer for his Master's sake. But his aged father had not the same views and principles to sustain his fortitude, and the sentence of his son's exile, was to him as the knell of eternal separation. The old man burst into a passionate flood of tears, and fell on the neck of Octavius, bitterly bewailing his fate, but without making any effort to shake his resolution.

The Proconsul now addressed Marcus, who seemed to have forgotten his own situation in the sympathy he felt for his father-in-law, and his friend.

"Marcus," said the magistrate, in a solemn voice, "I have delayed uttering the sentence, which it is my painful duty to pronounce on you, in the hope that listening to the milder punishment allotted to the milder offence of Octavius might be sufficient to shew you the determination of your gracious Emperor to crush rebellion and heresy, by the strong arm of the law. Octavius has shown himself unfit to serve among the loyal soldiers of the empire, and unworthy the name of a Roman

citizen; and Severus acts justly in removing him to a region where his evil example is not likely to produce much ill effect. The wild Armenians will not readily embrace the Nazarene mysteries and superstitions. But your crime has been more heinous, and your breach of the law more flagrant; for you have not only suffered yourself to be drawn away from our holy and ancient religion, and induced to bow your knee, and offer your worship at the shrine of the Jewish impostor; but you have also dared, in direct defiance of the imperial edict, to hold meetings of Christians at your own house; and there, no doubt, to sanction and encourage the rebellious projects, which are well known to be cherished by that pestilent sect. All this was fully ascertained before I dispatched my report to Severus; and, notwithstanding my desire to show favour to the son of my excellent friend, Fabius, I felt bound in honour and conscience, to send a full statement of the case to the Emperor."

Here Saturninus glanced at the man whom he called *his friend,* and a smile curled his lip. It was the smile of gratified malice, and Fabius returned it with a look of bitter hatred,

that he could no longer restrain. The Proconsul smiled again, and proceeded.

"You, Marcus, have incurred the penalty of death,—of death in a severe and appalling form; but I would fain rescue you from such a fate; and, therefore, notwithstanding your bold declaration of your adherence to your present opinions, I shall defer the execution of the fatal sentence for three weeks; and, during that time, I shall retain you as a state prisoner, and give permission to your wife and family to visit you, in the hope that this indulgence, and their persuasions, may yet have the effect of shaking your insensate resolution!"

"For this favour I thank you," replied Marcus, firmly, "and I ask no more. It is not in your power to grant me life *with honour;* and life, *without it,* would be a burden too heavy for me to bear. Horatius," he added turning to his father-in-law, and his lip slightly quivered as he spoke; "you must break this to my Vivia. Deal gently with her, for her heart has been sorely wounded already; but do not breathe one word of hope."

Horatius wrung his hand in silence; and left the hall supported by his son, who whispered

to Marcus that he would see him again ere long. Octavius was not detained a prisoner; for his sentence was one which he could not hope to evade by flight, and for which also it was necessary that he should make preparation. When they were gone, Fabius approached his son, and attempted to take leave of him; but grief, rage, and disappointment choked his utterance; and, shaking his clenched hand at the Proconsul, while his eyes flashed with fire, he muttered a bitter curse on his false friendship, and rushed from the tribunal. Marcus was then removed to his appointed place of confinement, which was not more incommodious than was consistent with security, and he was left to the undisturbed exercise of his own trying thoughts on the future. But he was not *all alone.* A spiritual Counsellor was with him; and the strength of his resolution increased as he realized the prize set before him, and the sacrifice which he was called to make, in order to secure its possession. He had already "counted the cost."

CHAPTER IX.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor *faint* when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Hebrews xii. 5, 6.

He doth not afflict *willingly*, nor grieve the children of men.

Lamentations iii. 33.

HORATIUS and his son immediately repaired to the dwelling of Marcus, to communicate to his wrerched wife the fatal sentence pronounced upon her husband. They found Marcella with her, awaiting in dread suspense the result of the summons which had called the two Christian soldiers to the tribunal of Saturninus. When Horatius and Octavius entered Vivia's apartment, they found her and her friend upon their knees, earnestly seeking from above that strength which they could not find in themselves. As the door opened they started to their feet, and gazed with wild and tearful eyes at those who entered; but the expression

of the two young women's countenances instantly varied strikingly. Marcella saw her husband return free and unguarded; and, for a moment, forgetting all else, she sprang towards him, and threw herself into his arms, with an exclamation of joy and gratitude. But Vivia looked in vain for her beloved Marcus. He came not; and her heart grew chill, and her eyes grew dim. She did not speak; but her pale lips quivered as she fixed her gaze on her father, and read in his grief-stricken features the confirmation of her worst fears.

Horatius approached her. He took her in his arms, aud placed her almost sinking form on a couch; and tears flowed down his venerable cheeks as he looked on her fair, sweet face, and saw the anguish of her soul depicted there. He had not courage to break the silence; but, with a desperate effort, Vivia raised herself, and catching both his hands in hers, she looked steadfastly and penetratingly into his countenance, and said in a deep, low voice of suppressed emotion,—

"Tell me all, my father. I can bear it. Is he *to die?*"

"The sentence is severe at present, my child,"

replied Horatius. And wishing, in spite of the injunction of Marcus, to inspire her with some hope, he added, "But it may be reversed;—it may be softened."

"On what terms, father?" again inquired the devoted wife, with the same fixed gaze at her father's countenance, and in the same low, unnatural voice.

"On the terms of his obedience to the decrees of the Emperor," he replied hesitatingly.

"And there is no other hope?" asked Vivia.

"Alas! I fear there is no other," answered her father sadly, and turned away to avoid her piercing gaze.

"Then my Marcus must die!" she exclaimed, —"my noble husband must go before me to the grave, and to his great reward in heaven! It will not be long ere I follow him."

She paused; and then all her forced calmness forsook her, and a burst of grief followed, that partially relieved her over-wrought brain, and saved her from madness. Utter exhaustion ensued, and she lay silent and motionless, with her eyes closed, and her hands clasped together in the attitude of prayer. No one interrupted her, for who could speak comfort

to a spirit tried as her's was? None but God: and she was communing with Him. Nor did she lift her soul to Him in vain. Oh no;—the grace, the strength, the submission she asked, were given; and Vivia was enabled to trust her own fate, and that of her beloved husband, in the hands of their covenant God and Saviour. She was enabled even to think of the fate of others who were dear to her.

She rose from her seat, and taking the hands of Marcella and Octavius, she joined them in her own, and said affectionately,—

"I have been selfish, my dear brother and sister. I have thought only of my own sorrow, and forgotten your joy. Octavius, you are liberated; and I do not even ask whether you have purchased freedom by a base submission. I know it could not be. But why are you so leniently treated; and he,—he, who only shared your fault,—why is the hand of the law so cruelly laid on him?"

"I am only liberated to prepare for perpetual banishment in the savage wilds of Armenia," replied Octavius. "I am thankful for my lot,—very thankful to be spared to my Marcella. But O, I feel very bitterly the want

of freedom now; for were I at liberty to go where I would, not an hour should elapse ere I would be on my way to Rome, to appeal to the Emperor's better feelings,—to his gratitude and his honour. Can he thus wantonly take the life of the very man whose courage and firmness saved him from assassination! But it cannot be; and I do wrong to speak thus to you, my sister, when I ought to seek only to prepare you for coming trials."

"I am prepared, Octavius," she replied gently. "I hope I am prepared to endure all that my God sees fit to lay upon me for the short time that I feel I have to live. Sorrow may kill slowly, but it kills surely; and I shall soon be with my husband and my child where all tears are wiped away, and where there is no more sorrow. But tell me," she continued hurriedly, "am I to see his face no more on earth? Is that dear countenance to smile on me no more until we meet again in the blessed company of the redeemed?"

"No, Vivia," the Proconsul is more merciful than to deprive the prisoner of your presence. He permits his wife and friends to visit him; but it is only in the hope that their

weakness may overcome his firmness; and his love for them prove stronger than his love for Christ."

"Then he knows neither Marcus nor his wife!" exclaimed Vivia; and something of her natural dignity and spirit appeared in her countenance, but tempered by a pious trust in the promised help of God. "Oh!" she continued, "he knows nothing of a Saviour's love, and a Saviour's faithfulness, which can raise poor, weak, trembling mortals above the fear of death, or the far heavier calamity of bereavement. But be his motive what it may, I gratefully accept his permission; and, by God's assistance, I will prove no hindrance to my Marcus in the dark and thorny path that duty bids him tread. No, I will be an 'help meet for him' in all his hours of trial. I did not know that I could feel so strong."

In wonder and admiration Vivia's sympathizing relatives listened to her words of holy confidence, and gazed at her now radiant countenance,—radiant with heavenly love, and heavenly hope. To Horatius her firmness seemed miraculous; but Octavius and Marcella knew whence her strength was derived, and they

"thanked God, and took courage" themselves to bear their lesser trials with the same pious fortitude.

"I will go to my husband at once," resumed Vivia. "Every hour, every moment, is now most precious. Come, Octavius, lead me to his dungeon; and let Marcella bear my father company to tell my mother and Julius that our worst apprehensions are realized, and to ask their prayers for Marcus and for his wife."

Closely veiled, and leaning for support upon her brother's arm, Vivia reached the prison door; and, in compliance with the orders which Saturninus had given, she was immediately conducted to the cell where Marcus was confined. Octavius remained in the ante-room; for he would not intrude on that sad meeting, or interrupt the freedom of the converse that then took place between the condemned husband, and his high-minded, devoted wife.

In half an hour a signal was made at the door; and, on its being opened by the guard, Marcus appeared, and beckoned to his brother-in-law to enter. The heavy door was again closed and bolted, and the three Christian relatives were left together. Octavius well knew

the strength of mind with which his sister was endued. He knew the depth of her piety, and the sincerity of her resignation to the will of God in all things; and he knew, also, that, for her husband's sake, she would make the greatest efforts to subdue every demonstration of feeling that could add to the bitterness of his trial, or tend in the least to shake his noble resolution. He therefore expected to find her firm and self-possessed, even during this trying interview. But he was not prepared to see the almost supernatural expression of holy joy and triumph that lighted up her features as he entered. Traces of tears were on her face,—traces of deep emotion and strong mental conflict,—but heavenly faith and hope had chased them all away; and a serenity that was not of this world had succeeded the natural feelings of grief and anguish. She rose, and taking her brother's hand, which trembled more than her own, she wrung it convulsively, and exclaimed—

"I knew it, Octavius! I knew that my husband's faith could not fail; and, in the depth of my agony, I can even thank God that I was not deceived. We may—we must be parted

here; but only for a little season. Soon, very soon, we shall be re-united; and then eternity will never again bring to us the sad hour of separation. Oh! it is a blessed hope, Octavius, that is vouchsafed to believers in the crucified and risen Lord!"

"Thanks be to God, my sister, that this assured hope is able thus to sustain you even now; and thanks—eternal thanks—be to His holy name for the stedfast faith that he has bestowed on our beloved Marcus. I never doubted him, Vivia; for I saw that, although he was somewhat behind-hand with us in embracing the Gospel, yet that he had far outstripped some of us in spiritual growth, and advancement in heavenly gifts. My brother," he added, turning to Marcus, and grasping his proffered hand; "my dear brother in Christ, your calmness and fortitude in the prospect of your heavy trial, makes me ashamed of even shrinking from the light sacrifice that I am called to make. Oh, if it were but our sentence to go into exile together, how light would my heart feel now. Even in the wilds of Armenia we could be a happy Christian family; —a little church in the wilderness! Now we

must look forward to the glorious time when we shall meet again in the company of 'just men made perfect,' in the presence of 'the Mediator of the new Covenant;' and God only knows how soon we may be called to follow you in the rough and narrow, but most glorious path of martyrdom!"

"I have often faced death unshrinkingly," replied Marcus, "and rushed upon the spears of the barbarians, for the cause of the Emperor, and in the hope of winning an honourable name among men. Shall I think it much to sacrifice my life for the cause of Christ; and to resign all earthly blessings for the sure possession of a heavenly crown from the hand of my God and Saviour, and the approving gratulations of angels? Oh, no, Octavius; I could exult in the prospect of the speedy entrance into everlasting life that awaits me, but for *one* fond tie to earth. It is hard to part so soon from her whose matchless worth I have so lately learned fully to prize, and whose happiness I had hoped to watch over for many coming years. It is hard to leave her unprotected in this cold and cruel world, from which she has already suffered so much. But

I know who has said, 'Let thy widows trust in me;' and I can resign her to His fatherly care and love with confidence. You, too, Octavius, will henceforth be more than a brother to her; for I have told her that it is my earnest desire that she should accompany you and Marcella to your place of exile. There she may dwell in peace and obscurity with our infant, and our adopted son; and train them up, unmolested, in the path of heavenly truth. It had been better perhaps for her," he added, as he looked tenderly at her now deeply-dejected countenance, and watched the tears flowing down her pallid cheeks; "it had been better, perhaps, for her if my reprieve had been shorter, and the sentence more speedily executed. This state of anxious suspense is more trying for her than the most dreadful certainty; but for myself I gratefully accept every hour that permits me still to behold her dear face, and listen to her beloved voice. I can forget the coming trial while she is with me."

"Oh! that I might share your captivity and your death, my Marcus!" cried Vivia: and, sinking on her knees, she grasped his hands, and looked imploringly up into his face. "Let

me go to the pagan governor, and tell him that I gathered the Christian meetings at your house:—that I went about and told the wretched perishing heathen of Jesus Christ and His salvation:—that I taught them to despise their gods of wood and stone, and bow their knees to the God of Heaven. If death is the due reward of your disobedience to the laws of Severus, then surely I have earned the crown of martyrdom too; and why should I live to mourn you, my beloved? Say that I may die with you!"

The manly heart of Marcus was wrung with agony, and every nerve quivered, as he witnessed this passionate outbreak of grief;—so different to the self-control which his wife had hitherto maintained;—but which she could maintain no longer. He raised her from the ground, and seated her on the rude pallet that served as his couch; and, when he could command his voice, he replied gently but firmly.

"My Vivia, where is your faith? '*Despise* not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither *faint* when thou art rebuked of Him;—for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and

scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' He is now chastening us for our profit, and we must neither fly from the rod, nor place ourselves under it uncalled, nor faint beneath its stroke. Oh! my love, it is not for me,—so long an unbeliever and a persecutor,—yes, even *your* persecutor;—to tell you that the duty of the Christian is *submission*:—you know it well, and have proved it nobly already; and I would but remind you that the same Heavenly Father, who permitted you to be so severely tried, even by the hand of your own husband, now sees fit to remove that penitent husband from you, and chastens you Himself yet further, in order to increase your meetness for a throne in the kingdom of glory. '*In patience* possess your soul,' yet a little while longer; and soon your trials will be over, and we shall rest together in the presence of Him who has washed us with His blood, and 'made us kings and priests unto God.' Promise me, Vivia, that this, my last desire, shall be complied with. Promise me that you will not cast away your life, so long as the Lord permits you to retain it without denying your faith."

"I do promise it, Marcus;" answered Vivia solemnly: and again her countenance had resumed something of the calm serenity that it wore when Octavius entered; and again the tumult of unconquerable feeling, and human weakness, was hushed.

"I do promise it; and I bless you for reminding me that I was giving way to selfish and rebellious feelings. O, my husband,—my dear Christian husband,—it is heaven to me to hear the words of divine truth, and holy exhortation from your lips. It is heaven to feel that death cannot part our spirits, now that they are one in Christ. I will strive to imitate your blessed faith and resignation; and, by the help of God, I will so master my weakness, and still the repinings of my breaking heart, that my visits to you shall prove no snare to your soul; but rather help you to 'fight a good fight, and keep the faith,' even unto the end!"

"There spoke my own high-souled Vivia again!" exclaimed Marcus, with a look of deep gratitude towards Heaven. "And now you must leave me. The hour has elapsed that is allowed me for earthly society; and I

must return to my solitary communings with God, and my own spirit. See, Vivia," he continued, and he drew from his vest a small copy of the New Testament, "I did not enter upon my conflict unarmed. I brought the lamp of truth with me to give me light in this dark place; and be assured I shall not feel utterly lonely. Farewell, my beloved. I shall count the hours and the minutes, until I see you again at this time to-morrow."

The sentry opened the door, and Octavius led Vivia from the cell, which was carefully secured as before. They returned to her desolate home; and sad were the hours that followed that touching interview. But Vivia had promised her husband to seek for strength; and she did both seek and find it; and never again did it fail her.

At the earnest request of Horatius, the Proconsul allowed Octavius and Marcella to take up their abode with Vivia, until the time of their banishment arrived. How soon that might be they knew not; but they were informed that they must be ready to embark in the first vessel which could be found to convey them to the port nearest to the place

of their destination. A guard was placed in the house, not only to secure to the government the confiscated property of Marcus, but also to watch the movements of Octavius, and prevent any attempt at escaping to some less dreary region than that appointed for his future residence. Attended by one or more of the soldiers who composed this guard, Octavius was, however, permitted to go to any part of the city, and make any arrangements that he wished before leaving his native country:—probably never to return. The payment of the heavy fine that formed a part of his sentence, left him but small means for procuring many of the comforts of civilized life, with which he desired to soften the severity of banishment to his wife; but she appeared totally indifferent to all personal comforts. Her soul was absorbed in gratitude for the one great blessing vouchsafed to her; —her husband's life; and in grief and sympathy for the cruel fate of the heroic Marcus, and his exemplary wife: and all minor considerations were forgotten by her. But they were not forgotten by Portia, nor even by the afflicted but disinterested Vivia. Not-

withstanding the grief that was consuming her spirit, and wasting her strength day by day, this admirable woman exerted herself in making preparations for the future comfort of her friend; and the exertion, like every act of benevolence, was a blessing to herself, by drawing her off, in some small degree, from the constant contemplation of her own overwhelming sorrow. Another object also engaged a portion of her attention, for it was one in which her Marcus was greatly interested;—the liberation of the venerable Christian Bishop. The confiscation of the whole of Marcus's personal property prevented his giving the pecuniary assistance towards this object, which he had intended and promised. But Vivia still possessed the costly gifts and presents which had been lavished on her before their marriage; and of these she selected the most intrinsically valuable, and disposed of them for such a sum as enabled her to complete the ransom of the Bishop, who was then immediately set free; and also to purchase many articles which she knew would be of inestimable worth to Marcella in her barbarous place of exile. An inward

presentiment told her that she should never share that exile; and this conviction added to her earnest desire to provide her friend and her brother with many useful memorials of her strong affection.

Days passed away, only too rapidly for Vivia. It is true they were days of mighty suffering and anxiety,—suffering and anxiety that threatened at times to crush her strong mind, and overturn her reason. But then she knew that this harrowing state of excitement and expectation would be succeeded by the dark night of despair; and though she could have wished the hour of trial over, and her beloved Marcus at rest, yet she dearly prized each day that was added to his life; for each day she was permitted to spend two short hours in his cell;—to talk with him of the past;—to talk with him of the future; and to unite with him in prayer:—yes, and in praises too, to the God of their salvation, and of their hope. And sometimes Vivia took to the cell of Marcus his infant son, and his adopted child Camillus; and fervent were the supplications which he offered up for these young disciples of Christ; and very touching were the exhortations which he addressed

to Camillus, and the simple and pious replies of the noble boy.

Many other of his relatives and friends also visited the condemned prisoner; and all but one endeavoured to give comfort and encouragement to his unfaltering spirit; and all but one rejoiced in the grace that was bestowed on him by the Master whom he served. That one was Fabius. All his natural affections, and all his pride, were centred in his son; and he bitterly felt the impending calamity which he saw no means of averting, except by inducing Marcus to do what he had himself done, and become a base apostate. Nor was it grief at the anticipated disgrace and death of his son that alone agitated his breast. He was goaded almost to madness by the suspicions he entertained that Saturninus had been instrumental in procuring the severe sentence that was pronounced on Marcus; and his mind was busily engaged in devising schemes by which his son might be rescued from the power of the Proconsul; or, at all events, by which he could wreak his vengeance on his false friend.

Vainly he tried by argument, by persuasion, and even by indignant reproaches, to shake the

resolution of the captive. And when he saw that all these means were equally unavailing, and that Marcus was resolved to abide patiently and firmly the execution of the sentence, he abruptly took leave of him, exclaiming,—

"I shall see you then no more; and you may die with the reflection that you have broken your father's heart by your perverseness. But I will have revenge! That shall now be my object,—my sole object in life; and for its attainment I will sacrifice all else. Farewell, Marcus," he added, as he approached to take his hand for the last time, and his hard features relaxed for a moment into an expression of grief and affection. "Farewell for ever! I thought to have seen you rise to the highest dignities and honours. I thought to have left this world with the proud feeling that the fame of my son would add lustre to my name. But this delusive folly, which once beguiled me almost to my ruin, has taken possession of you also, and all my hopes are blasted. You will die as a traitor to your Emperor, and the gods; and I shall have to endure shame and contumely as your father. But I forgive you."

Marcus was deeply moved at the sorrow and

disappointment which were so strongly marked in his father's manner and countenance. He threw himself into his arms, and embraced him with sincere affection, while he replied,—

"O, seek for no revenge on my account, my father. I freely forgive all who have been the means of bringing upon me this heavy condemnation. They are but instruments in the hand of my Heavenly Father, wherewith He chastens me, and tries the sincerity of my tardy faith. I am unworthy of the honour of martyrdom; and yet I glory in being chosen to bear testimony, even to the death, to the power, and the love of my merciful Redeemer. May His grace sustain me to the last! And now, my father, ere you leave me, let me urge upon you my last, my dying request. Let my death be the means of recalling you once more from the sin and the error of idolatry, and convincing you of the truth of that religion which once you embraced, and which alone has power to take away the sting of death, and fill the believer's soul with hope, and peace, and joy. O, let me intreat you to kneel once more at the throne of the only true God, and supplicate His pardon and His grace. Look once more

to Jesus as your Saviour, and your Teacher; and you will again enjoy a happiness to which you have long been a stranger. And if my emancipated spirit should be permitted to behold you again united to the Church of Christ, and trusting to Him for redemption, that sight would be a noble, a blissful recompense for all that I may suffer in my passage to a happier world. Can you refuse, my father?"

"Cease, Marcus!" cried his father in strong agitation. "Cease to speak to me on that hated subject. I have chosen my path in life. The die is cast, and I will abide by it. The Christians shall never have it in their power to say that they drew me back to their grovelling superstitions by first deluding my son, and bringing him to destruction. O, that I had power to exterminate the whole race; and blot from the earth those vile doctrines which have brought such misery upon mankind!"

"O, my father," replied Marcus eagerly; "add not, I beseech you, to the error you have committed in forsaking the Christian faith, that of falsely maligning its holy and saving doctrines. I will say no more: but may the Lord, in His infinite and undeserved mercy, bring you

to repentance, and recal you to the knowledge of the truth. To Him I commend your soul; and to Him I commit my own body, soul, and spirit, to be used as He sees fit for the promotion of His glory, and the confirmation of the faith of His believing people. I desire to have no will but His; for I know that these light afflictions are but for a moment, and that they will, through His grace, work for me an exceeding weight of glory, and of happiness. May it be my happy lot hereafter to welcome you, my father, into those realms of bliss, where, in a few short days, I shall be a joyful inhabitant, having 'washed my robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!' Who would resign such a prospect for a few years of life on earth? —a few years of shame and self-reproach!"

A deadly paleness overspread the countenance of Fabius, as his son uttered the last words; for conscience told him how true they were in his own experience. But he was still in "the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity;" and he did not even desire to escape from the shackles of sin and Satan, and to seek for peace in the doctrines of salvation, which he had known and rejected. A feeling of anger

against his son, whose noble conduct was such a deep reproach to him, was all that Marcus's confession of faith and confidence excited in his breast: and he left him with greater coldness than he had before manifested during this final interview. But he left him to devise schemes of vengeance for his death.

And others were busy in devising and executing schemes, by which they hoped to avert that death. Julius, the devoted Christian brother of Vivia, saw the ravages that grief was daily making in his sister's frame: and his ardent soul was bent on saving her husband, and turning her grief into joy, even if his own life was to be the sacrifice. He communicated his plan to Claudius Saturninus, and Secundulus; and he also secured the zealous co-operation of Marcus's pagan friend, Septimius; who admired his courage and self-devotion, though he could not value the Christian principles that inspired his conduct. The plan of Julius was to visit Marcus in prison during the hours allotted for the admission of his friends and relatives, and to take with him his three confederates. He then hoped to persuade Marcus to assume his dress; which, being loose and

flowing, might easily be accommodated to his more lofty stature, and to leave the prison in the dusk of evening, surrounded by his friends; and thus obtain his freedom, while Julius would remain to occupy his cell, and, if necessary, to receive the doom intended for him. Every thing was arranged for the flight of the prisoner from Carthage, and his concealment in a distant place of safety; and nothing seemed wanting to the success of the scheme, except the consent of him for whose preservation it was devised. With regard to obtaining this consent, Julius felt some doubts; as he well knew how revolting to his brother-in-law's generous nature would be the idea of another incurring danger for his sake. But he hoped to overcome his scruples by urging him to preserve his life for Vivia's sake: and also by the consideration that the danger he should himself incur was uncertain, as it was not probable that the Proconsul would inflict on him the full punishment intended for Marcus: and if he did thus make him his substitute, how gladly would he lay down his life, to save that of his friend and brother.

Every preparation was made, and then Julius

and his companions repaired in a body to the cell of Marcus just at the moment that they knew Vivia and Octavius had left him for the evening, and when the waning light would favour their enterprize. A small bribe to the guard procured their admission, although the prescribed hour for the entrance of visitors had just expired, and they were soon in the prisoner's narrow apartment. A short time sufficed to make him acquainted with their purpose; and they were more grieved than astonished at the decisive manner in which he rejected their offers. Not for one moment would he even entertain the proposal of Julius; and, the more urgent were his entreaties, so much the more firm, though grateful, were the replies of Marcus. In vain Julius urged the value of his friend's life, and the comparative insignificance of his own. In vain he represented that Vivia's very existence hung upon that of her husband, and that in preserving his own life, he would preserve hers also. Marcus was much moved by his generous devotion; but Julius saw that all his hopes must be utterly laid aside; hopes that he had so fondly cherished that he had fully persuaded himself they would

be realized. It was a sincere and bitter disappointment to the warm-hearted youth; and he felt the life which he was not permitted to sacrifice in what he deemed so good a cause, to be a burden to him. Sorrowfully he and his companions left the stedfast prisoner; and so deep was his dejection that it was marked by all his family, though none suspected the cause; for he had carefully concealed his project from all but those who were to assist in its execution; and Vivia never knew, in this world, of her brother's willingness to die for her husband's sake.

CHAPTER X.

He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.—*Psalm* 68, verse 20.

THE Emperor Severus was walking one evening with some of his officers and attendants, in the court of his palace at Rome; and he was expressing his surprise and displeasure at not having yet received any reply from Carthage to his communications both to Saturninus and the offender Marcus. Severus was not unmindful of the fate of his preserver. He was deeply grieved, and much incensed also, at the report of his conversion to Christianity; and he was resolved, if possible, to induce him to recant. And, although he had held out severe threats in his letter to Marcus, for the purpose of intimidating him, yet he had not made up his mind to proceed to extremities against one to whom he owed so much, and whom he so highly esteemed. In declaring that he had the

Emperor's orders to execute his sentence speedily, Saturninus had exceeded the truth. On the contrary, it was the express desire of Severus that time should be given to the prisoner for repentance: and that, should he prove obdurate, his case should again be referred to his own decision, before the capital punishment, which was pronounced in his public sentence, should be inflicted.

With much anxiety he awaited the return of his messenger, which he had for some days vainly expected; when, on the evening alluded to above, he paced up and down his palace court, and talked to his confidential friends of the evils which Christianity had brought about in the empire; and lamented the folly of Marcus and Octavius in listening to its debasing doctrines. Had he foreseen the obstinacy of the former he would have pronounced the same sentence on both the young officers, and thus at all events have saved his favourite from the chance of an ignominious death. But he hoped confidently to persuade him to renounce his newly adopted errors altogether, and to be able to promote him to honour, and bring him near to his own person: and therefore he threatened

more than he intended to perform, in order to mark his displeasure at the crime of which Marcus had been guilty, and in the belief that the threat would produce the effect which he desired. These hopes and expectations he openly confided to his chosen companions, and they warmly expressed the same sentiments; when their conversation was interrupted by the abrupt entrance, and hasty approach of a man in the dress of a freedman. He knelt before the Emperor, and Severus remembered him as the constant attendant of Marcus when he was at Rome. It was indeed the faithful Rufus, who had, unknown to the wily Saturninus, obtained a passage in the vessel that bore his own reply to the Emperor; and had, on coming to land, outstripped the messenger in his eagerness to plead for his master's life.

And well and eloquently did that freed slave plead. He boldly reminded Severus of the promise which he had heard him make to his master, when he parted with him, that the services he had rendered to him should never be forgotten; and that in any time of need he might apply to him, confiding in his gratitude. He extolled the public and private virtues of

Marcus, and urged the loss which the death of such an officer would prove to the state; and passionately he implored the Emperor to exercise his prerogative of mercy, and to pardon the man who had saved his life from the hand of an assassin.

Severus was astonished, but evidently not displeased, at his boldness; nevertheless he preserved a grave and stern expression of countenance, and demanded of Rufus, whether his master was acquainted with the steps he had taken, and whether he brought him any letter or message of submission from Marcus? Sadly Rufus was compelled to own that he bore no tidings of any change in his master's sentiments; and he added, that his journey had been undertaken without the knowledge of any one except Horatius, who had provided him with the means of performing it. And, observing the cloud that gathered on the dark brow of the Emperor, at his acknowledgment of his master's continuance in disobedience, he tried to move him by speaking of Vivia, of her beauty, her virtue, and her sufferings. But all his eloquence failed in extracting a promise of pardon from Severus. All that he could

obtain was a permission to remain in the palace until the arrival of the Proconsul's messenger; and the Emperor signified his intention of again seeing the freedman, and announcing to him his decision after perusing and considering the official dispatches.

That night Rufus passed in sleepless anxiety, for he saw that he had much to fear; and when, on the following morning, he was summoned to the private cabinet of the Emperor, the expression of his countenance did not raise his hopes. Severus informed him that the letter of the Proconsul brought tidings of the obstinate pertinacity of Marcus, and even bore a message of defiance from him,—for such the reply of Marcus was designated by Saturninus. Still he declared his unwillingness to decide the fate of his friend and preserver hastily; and desired Rufus to return immediately to Carthage by the same vessel which had brought him to Italy, and which awaited him in the port, and to declare to his master a reprieve of six months. He added, that he had written to Saturninus a letter to the same effect, and had commanded him to send the prisoner to Rome immediately, as he wished to confer with him himself.

Rufus saw in all this the strong desire of the Emperor to save the life of Marcus, if he could do so without lowering the authority of his magistrate, or dishonouring his own laws. He saw that Severus loved his master, and strong hope sprang up in his ardent breast. He poured forth his joy and gratitude, with a warmth that showed he believed the danger was fully past, and his master's life secured.

Soon the vessel was again on its homeward way, and every sail was set that could waft her onwards, for the command of the Emperor was urgent that not a moment should be lost. He had perceived the malignity of Saturninus towards both Fabius and his son, from the tone of his last letter, and he feared entrusting the life of the latter to his discretion or his vengeance. He feared that he might take advantage of the power which he possessed, and hasten to execute a sentence, which had indeed been pronounced upon the offender, but which he never intended should be acted upon, until every other means had been fully tried.

Meanwhile the hours and the days passed by. O how quickly they seemed to come and go to those at Carthage, who counted them as the

last precious remains of life to one most dearly loved! It was well for Vivia that she knew nothing of the efforts that Rufus was making in her husband's behalf; for such a knowledge would only have excited hopes that might prove fallacious, and would thus have disturbed the deep, and almost calm, resignation, which she had been enabled to attain by the power of faith. She had *no hope* on earth,—but she had *security* in Heaven,—and her spirit seemed to live above this world of trial, and already to realise those heavenly joys into which her beloved Marcus was so soon to enter, and where she hoped ere long to follow him.

Much of her time, between the hours which she was permitted to spend in the prison, was passed alone. She found that her strength was best sustained by lonely communion with her God; and the sympathy even of her dearest earthly friends, only tended to agitate her feelings, and bring them down to the things of time and sense. Still, at times, the society of her mother and brothers, and her much-loved friend, Marcella, was soothing to her, and the tears she shed with them were often a seasonable relief to her too-highly wrought feelings.

It was therefore one more grief to her overcharged heart, when she was informed that Octavius had orders to embark on the following morning, in a vessel that was ready to sail towards the east; and not an hour's delay could be afforded to the exiles.

Three days had still to elapse of the time which Saturninus had fixed as the term of Marcus's probation; and Octavius and Marcella earnestly desired to remain in Carthage until the fatal day had passed, in the hope that then they might induce the bereaved Vivia to accompany them, in accordance with her husband's wish. But this desire, which was made known to the Proconsul by Horatius, was coldly denied; and the exiles were compelled to prepare for immediate embarkation. Numidicus had intended to accompany them, and leave for ever the place where he had suffered so much; and to this arrangement Saturninus had given a ready consent, for he rejoiced in thus getting rid of so active and influential a Christian as the Presbyter, by voluntary banishment. But now his determination was changed, and he decided on remaining in the city until he could take charge of Vivia and

the children, and with them, follow his daughter and her husband into Armenia; and in this plan Saturninus also acquiesced, for he regarded Vivia as a very dangerous person, on account of the deep interest which her fate had formerly excited, and which was now greatly heightened; and although he would not delay the departure of Octavius, he yet had no desire to retain the beautiful and ill-fated Vivia, and only regretted that he had no authority to banish her with her brother, before the execution of her husband should raise to a higher pitch the sympathy that was already felt for her by many in Carthage.

Octavius and Marcella bade farewell to the prisoner when Vivia was not present. They spared her feelings the unnecessary trial, and they wished again to assure Marcus that they would watch over her and his child with devoted affection and care, so long as life should be spared to them. It was a trying hour; but it was well endured by all the three Christian friends, and all rejoiced in the spiritual strength that was manifested by their fellow-sufferers. At dawn of day the vessel weighed anchor, and Vivia from the terrace on the housetop,

watched the receding forms of the exiles until they could no longer be distinguished in the morning mist that hung over the wide waters. She felt that she had taken her last look at them on earth.

And two more days and nights had passed away; and the last evening of Marcus's appointed life had arrived. Once more he was led to the presence of Saturninus; and once more, in reply to his interrogations, he made a bold avowal of his faith, and indignantly rejected every offer of mercy that was coupled with a denial of his love for his Redeemer. Was the Proconsul more affected by rage at his obduracy, or by secret satisfaction at the certainty of enjoying to the full his desired revenge on Fabius? It were hard to tell which evil passion predominated in his breast, and flashed in his excited eye. Certain it is that as he was denied the triumph of beholding Marcus an apostate, he was resolved not to lose the Satanic joy of taking vengeance on his false friend. It is true he had not received absolute authority from the Emperor to put Marcus to death until he had again communicated with him. But by the edict which Severus

had recently published, the prisoner had undoubtedly been guilty of a capital crime; and on the strength of this edict he intended to rest his defence, if hereafter his precipitancy should be blamed by his Imperial master. With a malignant joy therefore, which he ill concealed under the mask of regret and sympathy, he proceeded to pronounce the final sentence of condemnation, and to detail the particulars of the victim's cruel fate. It was one to make the naturally proud spirit of Marcus burn within him; for it was a doom of shame, which Saturninus well knew would be more trying to the noble young officer than any amount of bodily pain.

He condemned him to die by the axe; and for this sentence Marcus felt grateful. But then the governor proceeded to decree that his death should not take place until after the sun had set on the following evening; and that from the dawn of the coming day he should stand, bound to a stake, near the place of execution, exposed to hunger and thirst, and the burning rays of the summer's sun, and the still more torturing insults of the heathen populace. This sentence made the blood of Marcus to boil

in his veins, and words of proud indignation rose to his lips. But he checked them, for he remembered that his Saviour had endured similar sufferings for his sake, and had "not opened his mouth;" and he silently listened to the doom pronounced upon him by his judge; and, without a word of reply, was led back to his cell.

Fabius was not present during this interview between his son and the governor; but the result of it was immediately made known to him by his confidential slave Revocatus; who, by his orders, was present in the hall of judgment, and who gloried in the Christian fortitude of Marcus, while he deeply deplored his fate. Revocatus did not suspect what were the intentions of his master on hearing the final decree of Saturninus; for Fabius well knew that he was not the man to whom he could confide his murderous schemes, or of whom he could ask asssistance in destroying a tyrant, even in order to preserve his only son from a cruel death. But such were the senator's designs; and everything was prepared for their execution so soon as the fate of Marcus was irrevocably decided. Muttering impreca-

tions on the head of Saturninus, he left his slave, and hastened to meet the men whom he had largely bribed to be the instruments of his vengeance, and give them their final orders.

His plan was that the assassins should take their station the following morning upon the steps that led from the judgment-hall into the street; and that, when the governor was in the act of descending them, to lead his victim to the place of execution, and when he well knew a dense crowd would be gathered around him, they should rush upon him from behind, and stab him with the daggers which they were to carry concealed beneath their garments. In the confusion of the moment there was little doubt but that they would easily escape among the crowd, many of whom were extremely disaffected towards the Proconsul, and would be inclined to favour those who should attempt to rid them of his tyranny. Fabius was the magistrate next in rank and authority to Saturninus. The temporary government of the city would therefore necessarily fall into his hands on the death of the Proconsul; and thus it would be in his power to effect the release of his son, while at the same time he would attain

the darling object of his ambition, and also satiate his feelings of hatred and revenge. He passed a restless night, awaiting in deep anxiety and impatience the success of his deep-laid scheme.

But while so many evil passions were either excited or strengthened by the expected fate of Marcus, he himself enjoyed a holy and a heavenly peace. Not one repining thought crossed his breast;—not one doubt of the mercy and love of his covenant God, in thus severely trying him, entered his heart;—not one desire for vengeance troubled his subdued spirit. He was calm,—calm even in the immediate prospect of humiliation and death. Such is the power of faith, and of a will that is conformed to the will of God!

Soon after he returned to his place of confinement, Vivia entered. The report of her husband's sentence had been conveyed to her by Felicitas, who had accompanied her husband, Revocatus, to the hall of judgment: and she had heard it with fortitude,—for she knew that death could be her Marcus's only path to freedom; and though she deeply felt the indignity to which he was to be exposed previous

to the final stroke, yet she experienced a sensation of relief and gratitude at finding that none of the severe tortures, so frequently inflicted on condemned Christians, were to form a part of his cup of suffering.

By his request she took with her on this occasion both his infant son and the orphan Camillus, to receive his parting embraces and benedictions; and she was also accompanied by the venerable Bishop, who came to take a final leave of the noble convert, and to commend his soul to the care and keeping of his God. Brief time was allowed for these touching scenes, for Marcus saw how they shook the fortitude of his wife; and he desired to spend as much as possible of the time allowed him for her presence, alone with her and his Saviour.

The unconscious infant smiled when his father took him in his arms, and fondly pressed him to his breast for the last time. But Camillus knew, and deeply felt, the loss he was about to sustain; and, though he strove to repress his grief for Vivia's sake, yet his little heart was too full, and tears and sobs burst forth as he knelt to receive his adopted father's

blessing. Then he threw himself into his arms and clung weeping to his neck, until Lucretia, hardly less affected than himself, removed him with gentle force; and, pressing her master's hand, withdrew with both the children. The Bishop's voice faltered as he approached the prisoner; but he recovered his strength when he saw the holy calmness which the countenance of Marcus had resumed as he bent to receive his blessing. Vivia stood with him; and there was something unutterably lovely in the meekness and resignation that were depicted in her features and her attitude. That group in the gloomy prison-house was worthy of the pencil of a Christian artist.

Few and solemn were the words that the Bishop spoke: and then he folded Marcus in his arms, and left the heroic husband and wife to the last hour of uninterrupted communion that they hoped to enjoy on earth. And how did they spend it? Not in fruitless tears, and lamentations, and regrets. No, they had fully "counted the cost" when they enrolled themselves as the followers of the crucified Jesus; and even in nature's hour of suffering they did not repine at the sacrifice which He demanded

of them. They had prayed, like their Divine Master, that "*if it were possible*," the cup of sorrow might pass away from them; but now, when the dread hour approached, they were enabled, like that Divine Master, to say, "Thy will be done.". They were enabled even to praise Him that they were "counted worthy to suffer for His sake."

They knelt and prayed together; and in the stillness of that evening hour, the guard in the corridor heard the calm tone of their united voices; and he wondered why Christians were so tranquil in the prospect of death. Was it because they were insensible to the pang of death; or the still more bitter pang of separation? O, no; God, who seeth the heart, saw the anguish that was felt both by Marcus and Vivia at the thought of the tie that bound them together being severed so fearfully. The Lord saw that their sorrow was too great for utterance; and He gave them strength proportioned to their day, and enabled them to view the coming trial with resignation, and to look forward with joyful confidence to a blissful future, and a rich recompence in heaven.

Fervently, and most truly did Vivia assure

her husband, that, even in that moment, she could rejoice in his conversion to the religion of Christ, which had brought upon them such deep affliction; and that she did, from her heart, thank God that she was permitted to see him die a Christian, rather than live an idolator. "For now," she added, "I know that eternity will not divide us; but that we shall be united for ever to our angel-child, and to each other, before the throne of God, and of the Lamb; and serve Him day and night in His temple. Then, Marcus, we shall rejoice, without any mixture of sorrow, in all the trials which have been allotted to us on earth; and which have, by the grace of God, prepared us for the joys of His kingdom of Heaven. Oh! how often, when I and our Elva were alone in exile, have I prayed, and taught her to pray, that ere our God called you out of this world, he would cause you to see and receive the truth. How often have I supplicated Him to vouchsafe me the blessing of seeing you a Christian, whatever might be the means, or whatever the consequences of such a change in your heart. And the Lord has heard my prayer. He has

granted my petition: and shall I now complain that it is accompanied by sorrow? No, my beloved Marcus, I will not complain that you enter on your rest a little while before me; and that our Elva will welcome you to the abodes of the blessed a little while before my earthly race is run."

"Yes, my Vivia," replied Marcus; "it is but a *little while;* and we shall meet again, 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' May it please God to call you to Himself by a tranquil and easy path, and save you from the hands of cruelty and violence. Your spirit is very strong; but your delicate frame is ill-adapted to encounter scenes of blood. Promise me again that you will follow your brother to his place of exile, and live in obscurity as long as the Lord sees fit to prolong your life. I fear that the widow of the condemned Marcus will not be regarded with much leniency by the Government; and the thought of your being called to endure outrage and cruelty is now the sharpest pang that pierces my heart."

"Do not fear for me, Marcus," said his

wife. "I will sacredly abide by my promise, and call on myself no needless observation. But, oh! how welcome would a death, even of violence, be to me, if it hastened my reunion with you. Life must henceforth be a blank to me; and this world a solitary desert. My one sole object shall be to live in such a manner as to bring no dishonour on your dear name, or on the cause of my Saviour. I will live, if it is the will of God, and train up your child to walk in his father's steps. But I feel assured that such will not be my lot. I shall follow you, my love;—I shall follow you quickly; and this conviction helps to sustain me now."

Marcus saw that she derived consolation from the belief which had taken possession of her mind; and he did not try to dispel it. He only charged her, in such an event, to commit her child and young Camillus, to the care and guardianship of Octavius; and he gave her a few directions concerning the small property which had been bequeathed to the orphan by his grandfather, and which had fortunately escaped confiscation with his own possessions, in consequence of his hav-

ing placed it in the hands of a Christian merchant.

Vivia had not declared to Marcus her intention of being present throughout the sad scenes of the following day; for she feared that he would, perhaps, forbid her from subjecting her feelings to such a severe trial: and he believed, indeed he almost hoped, that he should see her no more after she left his cell that evening. He ceased to speak, for his heart was filled with deep emotions, and his feelings became too strong for utterance; nor had Vivia any longer the power to sustain the conversation. Marcus leaned upon the little table that stood by his couch, and he shaded his face from the light of the lamp, to conceal his countenance, while his eyes were sadly fixed on Vivia's face: and he thought, as he marked her altered features, and sunken cheeks, that there was, indeed, reason to believe that she would not long survive him. He sat silent, and how many and how deep were his thoughts! But dread of his own approaching fate had little share in his reflections.

Vivia was silent too. Her eyes were closed;

for her soul was absorbed in the thought of all that her Marcus must so soon endure: and her heart sickened as she pictured to herself his commanding form bound ignominiously to a stake, and exposed to insult and violence: —and then the final blow! Oh! it was anguish indeed;—and she pressed her beating temples to drive away the maddening sensation that went near to overthrow all her tried fortitude and resignation. Could suffering be greater than her's? At that moment the accustomed signal was made by the guard, to give notice that she must leave the prisoner, as the gates were about to be closed for the night. Vivia started, as from a hideous dream, and looked up at the beloved countenance that was gazing mournfully at her's. Oh! what a world of feeling and intelligence was in that gaze when their eyes met. No word was spoken; for words are inexpressive of the emotions of such moments. He folded her in his arms, and imprinted one long fervent kiss on her cold pallid brow: and then he bore her unresistingly to the door, and placed her, senseless and motionless, in the arms of Julius, who stood there with the

sentinel to receive her. A tear was in the eye of the rough jailer; but none in that of Marcus. Tears would have been happiness.

Morning broke, and with the first dawn of light Vivia arose from the couch where she had lain and watched through the passing hours of night. She arose, weak indeed in body, but strong again in spirit; for the Lord had given her strength. Julius had remained with her that night, and was now ready to accompany her to the place of execution. Nor did he attempt to dissuade her from going thither; for he could enter into her feelings; and he was assured that so long as she could be in the presence of her husband, and minister, by word, or look, or action, to his comfort her own sufferings would be less keenly felt than if she were to remain at a distance. He therefore led her forth, closely veiled, into the street, hoping to reach the appointed place before the crowd, who thirsted for the spectacle, should have gathered there. Vivia leant on his arm in silence; but Julius saw that her step was firm, and her demeanour tranquil, and he looked at her with renewed wonder and admiration.

In order to reach the place of execution it was necessary to pass through the square in which stood the palace of Saturninus, and the hall of judgment; and Julius drew his sister on as rapidly as possible, fearing that the sad procession might issue from the gates before she was out of sight. His effort, however, to spare Vivia this additional trial, was fruitless; for, just as they were opposite to the hall, a stir was observed among the crowd that thronged around the steps; and a murmuring sound of many voices announced the approach of the prisoner and his judge. Vivia looked up, and instantly her eyes met those of her husband, whose commanding figure rose above those of the populace. His arms were bound behind him, and he was roughly led by a lictor on each side; but his countenance was calm and undisturbed, and a smile of involuntary pleasure lighted up his features, as he beheld the form of his beloved Vivia, which he had never hoped to see again on earth. But the smile soon passed away, and was succeeded by a look of anxious concern; for he felt how distressing and how perilous was her situation; and he would fain have

made a signal to Julius to remove her. His own fettered position however prevented him from thus expressing his fears and his wishes; and the guard interrupted his thoughts by rudely pushing him forwards, exclaiming that the Proconsul was leaving the hall.

Marcus descended the lofty flight of steps; and Saturninus, gorgeously attired, appeared on the summit. In an instant all was confusion. The crowd that stood around and upon the steps, were violently agitated, and shouts of "treachery" and "murder" rose loudly from several voices. Saturninus darted a fierce glance around him. He staggered, and would have fallen, but for the support of his attendants; and while they were occupied with him, two men were observed making violent efforts to escape among the crowd, many of whom were evidently favouring their attempt. But it was useless. They were both secured, and brought before the Proconsul, who was now seated in a chair which had been placed by his orders in the porch; and, forgetful of the wound which he had received in the side from the dagger of one of the assassins, his thoughts were only bent on discover-

ing their employer, and inflicting summary punishment.

The criminals remained doggedly silent, and gave no reply to his interrogations, and his rage became unbounded; for he strongly suspected that Fabius was concerned in this plot, and he yearned for a plausible excuse for accomplishing his destruction. At present, however, he was baffled; but he ordered the ruffians to be heavily ironed, and thrown into a dungeon; and added a threat that torture should wring from them all that they now refused to confess.

The wound which he had received was slight, although the force with which the assassins had rushed upon him had nearly thrown him to the ground, and led them to believe at the moment that they had accomplished their deadly purpose. A short time sufficed to staunch the blood, and apply a bandage; and then the exasperated judge commanded the procession to move on to the place of execution; and he followed his destined victim, exulting that at least the son of Fabius was already in his power, and that in his person he could reach and torture his father's heart. On his way he brooded in his vindictive mind how he could add to the

sufferings he already destined for Marcus; and he gave some private orders to the captain of his guard, who immediately returned to the town-hall to execute them.

While the attention of the crowd had been engrossed by the sudden attempt on the life of Saturninus, Julius had hastened through the square, and conducted his sister undisturbed to the open space which was to be the scene of her husband's humiliation and death. There they took their stand together close to the stake to which he was to be bound, and awaited his arrival in painful silence. Soon he appeared: and the lictors led him to the stake, and proceeded to strip him to the waist, and expose his fine manly figure to the gaze of the mocking crowd. The blood mounted to his brow, and his lips were strongly compressed; but he did not speak. He only glanced at Vivia, and then raised his eyes to heaven. As the soldiers were about to bind him to the stake, Saturninus commanded them to forbear; adding that such a position was too easy for the son of a murderer. At the same moment the rumbling of heavy wheels was heard, and a cart came slowly across the field, bearing a large iron instrument, some-

thing in the form of a gigantic gridiron. It was lifted from the cart, and placed by the side of the prisoner: and, at the signal of the governor, Marcus was seized by the soldiers, and laid across the sharp projecting bars that formed this bed of torment, and bound down tightly, by cords that passed round his body and limbs.

"Rest there," cried the tyrant, "and learn to welcome the stroke of death that will this night dismiss your soul to the place appointed for all who despise the gods, and worship an impostor."

"Do your worst;" replied Marcus calmly. "Your power extends only to my body. My spirit is free: and even now rejoices in the presence of my Saviour."

A shout of fiendish merriment resounded from the heathen bystanders at this reply; and every invective that malice could suggest, was poured upon the sufferer. Nor were the insults of the populace confined to words. Blows were struck by several ruffians at the bound and disabled form, that, if free, they would have trembled to encounter; while missiles of various kinds were thrown from a distance by those who dared not, or could not, approach nearer.

Hitherto Vivia had stood, silent and motionless, leaning on Julius for support, and almost unnoticed by the savage crowd. But when she saw the breast of her husband lacerated by a heavy stone, and the blood flowing from the wound, she could restrain her feelings no longer. She sprang forward and threw herself over his body, extending her arms to shield him from further violence; while at the same time she turned her lovely face to the assailants, with a look of such agony and supplication, as touched the hearts even of these bigotted persecutors. They stayed their hands, and hushed their mocking voices at the sight of such love and devotion. The impression thus made was eagerly followed up, and strengthened, by the efforts and persuasions of several persons, who, in the garb of the lower orders, moved through the crowd, and strove by every means to excite feelings of pity for the beautiful and unhappy Vivia, the pride and ornament of their city. These persons were Septimius, the pagan friend of Marcus, and his Christian associates, Claudius, Secundulus, and the slave Revocatus. Their endeavours were effectual; and not another act of violence took place: scarcely

another word of reproach was uttered. Vivia rose, and looked her unutterable gratitude at the admiring crowd; and then knelt down beside the suffering form of her beloved, and gave her whole attention to the task of lessening his momentarily increasing agony. Little could she, and her faithful brother, Julius, do to assuage the sufferings of his body: but much, very much did they comfort and strengthen his spirit, by their affectionate sympathy, and by the words of holy peace, and heavenly hope, which they whispered to him. The very presence of his wife was joy to his heart; joy that he had never hoped to enjoy again in this world; and even agony was welcome so long as she was there to hold his hand in hers, and wipe away the drops that started from his brow.

The Proconsul left the field. He saw that Marcus was in bodily torment, and he could not appreciate his spiritual consolations. He returned to his palace, to endeavour to extract, by torture, some confession from the assassins, that could authorise the apprehension of Fabius, and give him an opportunity of yet more effectually satiating the vengeance that burned so fiercely in his breast.

Many of the crowd followed him, hoping for fresh excitement in the trial of the murderers; and many others left the place, weary of gazing at the group that occupied the centre of the field of blood. In a few hours scarcely any spectators of the touching scene remained, except the guards and executioners, whose office it was to watch and carry out the sentence of the governor. He had intimated his intention of returning to witness the closing scene at the appointed hour of night; and till then the sufferings of his victim were to continue unabated.

The sun looked down fiercely from his meridian height, and scorched the undefended form of Marcus, though Vivia strove to shelter him. "The iron entered into his soul," and a burning fever, attended with intolerable thirst, came on. The command of Saturninus was that neither food nor drink should be afforded to the sufferer. But Revocatus dared to disobey the command; and, soon after mid-day, he brought water to slake the thirst of Marcus, and to cool his brow, and wine to recruit the strength of Vivia and her brother. The guards did not interfere, for they knew Revocatus as

the slave of Fabius, and they could not deny to Vivia the comfort of administering this small relief to her exhausted husband. Gratefully did she receive the unlooked for boon, and patiently did she kneel through the long, painful hours by the side of Marcus, and wet his parched and burning lips, and bathe his loved features, and listen to the words of faith, and pious confidence in God, that at intervals he continued to utter. Once, and only once, he entreated her to leave him; for he feared his increasing agony might at length overcome his fortitude, and he dreaded the last concluding scene for her. But when he saw the anguish of her soul at the idea of forsaking him, and the firmness with which she continued her labour of love, he forbore to urge her departure, and only asked for grace and strength to be given to her to enable her to go through the protracted trial.

Evening drew on, and Vivia watched the declining sun, which seemed, as it reached the horizon, to be bearing away her husband's existence. Could she wish that existence prolonged in his present state of suffering? No. She felt that it would be blessed to see him

sleeping the calm sleep of death. But nature shrank from the stroke that must sever him from her;—it shrank from the stroke of violence.

The sun sank down behind the western hills, and twilight rapidly came on. Twilight died away, and darkness succeeded. And soon the distant flare of torches, the tramp of many feet, and the hum of many voices, told that the inexorable judge approached, and that the life of the martyr was limited to moments. Vivia did not speak, she scarcely breathed; but she kept her station, and she still continued her devoted attentions to her husband, as though she knew not that they would so soon be unneeded and unavailing.

Just then a tall, dark figure approached the spot where Marcus lay. He was enveloped in a long cloak, and until he spoke no one recognised Fabius. He hastily caught the hand of his son; and, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion, he whispered,—

"I have failed in saving you, my son. I will yet revenge you!"

"Say not so!" cried Marcus. "'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord.' O, my

father, forgive my murderers, as I do at this moment. Learn forgiveness from Him who prayed on the cross for His enemies."

"Never!" answered Fabius, in a voice of desperation, that struck painfully on the heart of his Christian son. "Never, Marcus! I have sinned past forgiveness; and I will never forgive. But they come. The false tyrant brings on his ruffian band. Farewell, my son, *for ever!* Life has yet a value, for revenge is yet to be obtained; and I must conceal myself now."

He hastily withdrew into the darkness, and remained where he could witness the coming scene without any risk of observation.

Saturninus approached the iron bed, and looked fixedly at the noble form that lay stretched upon it. Then he glanced at Vivia; and, as his eye met her uplifted gaze, he turned away and shuddered. Yes, the tyrant shuddered at his own work: but he did not long relent, for the work of vengeance was not yet completed.

"Unbind him," he exclaimed, "and lead him to the block. And remove this lady;—this is no place for females."

"A wife's place is by her husband to the last," cried Vivia eagerly. Then in a tone of calmness that surprised Saturninus, she added, "Suffer me to remain, my lord. You need fear no interruption from my weakness."

"Be it as you will," replied the Proconsul sternly. "Here, lictors, do your duty. It will soon be over." And then he added, as if speaking involuntarily, "I would it was the father instead of this brave soldier."

The bands were removed from the limbs of Marcus, and he was assisted to rise. The moment he felt himself at liberty, he turned to Vivia; and, clasping her in his arms, he breathed a fond farewell, and a last fervent blessing. Then he walked towards the block, and kneeling down before it, he committed his soul to God, and calmly awaited the stroke of the headsman.

Whence arose that distant sound? What mean the shouts of joy that mingle with the accustomed cry, "Death to the Christians?" And whose form is that which struggles with the crowd, panting and almost breathless; yet, at every gasp, repeating wildly the word "*Reprieve?*"

It was Rufus, bearing the letter of Severus; and madly rushing on in the hope of saving his master's life. Fabius forgot his wish for concealment, and sprang forward, joining in the cry "Reprieve," which was now taken up by the ever-fickle crowd, and rang through the air. Saturninus saw that his victim was about to be snatched from his grasp, and ere Rufus could approach him, or deliver the Emperor's order, he resolved to execute his purpose; and he gave the signal for the fatal stroke. The headsman raised his axe, but waited yet for his final orders.

"Hold!" shouted the excited crowd.

"Strike!" cried Saturninus, fiercely.

The axe fell;—and the head of Marcus, severed at one blow, rolled on the ground. The martyr had gained his crown!

CHAPTER XI.

Brother, thou art gone before us, and thy saintly soul is flown
Where tears are wiped from every eye, and sorrow is unknown;
From the burthen of the flesh, and from care and fear released,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

And when the Lord shall summon us, whom thou hast left behind,
May we, untainted by the world, as sure a welcome find:
May each, like thee, depart in peace, to be a glorious guest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.
MILMAN.

THE keen eye of the Proconsul had caught a glimpse of Fabius, when he rushed forward to listen to the reprieve of his son, and the glare of the torches fell on his agitated countenance. His vengeance was not satiated by the death of Marcus, and he only desired the more ardently to accomplish the destruction of his enemy, now that he had so deeply injured him. Instantly, and secretly, he gave his orders to the Captain of his guard; and ere long the wretched Fabius was secured, and

placed in the very cell which his son had so lately occupied. This was a refinement of cruelty; and tended to drive the prisoner to still greater desperation. He readily surmised that the assassins whom he had employed to rid him of his deadly foe, had confessed his share in the intended crime; and he well knew what fate he had to expect now that he was in the power of that foe. He was not mistaken. The hired ruffians had, under the influence of torture, betrayed him; and his destruction was resolved on by the implacable Saturninus. Did he now employ the short period that he expected to live, in deep and earnest penitence for his past offences, and in humbly seeking forgiveness at the footstool of the God and Saviour whom he had so greatly offended?

No, his heart was hardened; and rage, resentment, and despair, were the passions that reigned within it, unchecked by any softer or better feelings. Remorse, perhaps, he did feel, but not the "godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto life;" and the solitary hours that he passed during the first night of his imprisonment, were hours of utter misery, unmiti-

gated by any earthly consolations, or heavenly hopes.

Such was not Vivia's state. Grief, unutterable grief, was her's indeed. But if her afflictions abounded, so much the more did her consolations abound. In the midst of her natural feelings of anguish, she yet enjoyed an inward and supernatural *peace*,—a *peace* which none but Christians can share,—for it was the parting legacy of the Christian's God. The death of Marcus had rudely severed

> That only tie;
> For which she loved to live, or feared to die*.

and henceforth her hopes and her affections were in heaven. Still she was resigned to live, if such should be her Father's will; and to devote herself to the care of her infant son, and the orphan Camillus; but such was not her desire. Her weary spirit yearned for "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," and she felt within herself a strong hope that it would not long be withheld from her. Once the natural fear of death, and love of life, had been very strong in Vivia; but her strongest bonds

* Southey.

to earth had been broken,—her idols had been taken from her, and her spiritual affections had been "set on things above;" and she had been taught that "it was good for her that she had been afflicted," that she might "learn the way of the Lord," and *love that way.*

Her parents, and Felicitas, were awaiting her in deep anxiety when Julius led her home from the last fatal scene. They feared the trial would have proved too great for both her mental and physical powers; and they rejoiced in wonder when they beheld the calmness of her demeanour, and the serenity of her features, now divested of the anxious expression which they had worn of late. But all was over now; Vivia had nothing either to hope or fear on earth; and the emotions of her soul were for a time dried up and paralyzed. Gently she replied to the tender sympathy of her parents and her friend; and then, having gazed awhile at her now fatherless boy, and kissed his sleeping cheek, she retired to her solitary chamber, where she requested to be left undisturbed.

The news of Fabius's appprehension for the attempted murder of the Proconsul, reached Horatius early on the following morning; and,

knowing how strongly the feelings of Saturninus were already excited against his former friend, he hastened to the palace to learn his intended fate, and try, if possible, to obtain a mitigation of it. He was admitted to the presence of the Proconsul, who frankly told him, that it was useless for him to plead the cause of Fabius, as he was resolved to bring him to trial that very day, and to act on the evidence which would be produced, and which, he added, was conclusive as to his guilt. Horatius perceived that all further remonstrance would be but idle waste of time, and he forbore to urge his request. He entreated, however, to be permitted to visit the prisoner; for he still retained a strong regard for the man who had for so many years been his companion and friend, notwithstanding that recent events had greatly interrupted their intimacy.

His request was granted, and he was conducted to the cell, where, on the previous day, he had taken leave of Marcus. The door was unlocked, and he advanced a few steps into the dimly-lighed apartment, but quickly drew back in horror, for the spectacle that met his eyes made his blood curdle in his veins.

Stretched on the rude pallet lay the expiring form of Fabius. Blood still trickled fast from a gaping wound in his neck, and his hand convulsively clutched a small sharp-edged dagger, with which he had evidently wrought his own destruction. His countenance was ghastly and distorted, and his limbs writhed horribly in the agonies of dissolution; still his senses had not departed, and as his eyes glared fiercely round, they fell on the motionless figure, and horror-stricken features of Horatius. He strove to speak,—he gasped violently for breath,—and at length, in a fearful, and scarcely audible voice, he uttered these words.

"Horatius, I have escaped the tyrant's vengeance!—But *Hell!—Hell* is my portion!" He paused for power to speak again, and then continued,—"I deserted the only Saviour,—and now I am lost for ever.—O, God!" he shrieked, "I dare not pray. Devils have laid hold of my soul.—I come, ye fiends,—I am your victim!"

A dreadful struggle ensued;—it became fainter;—the contracted limbs fell, and the soul of Fabius was in the presence of his Judge.

Horatius hurried from the appalling scene, and strove to banish it from his mind, but it was in vain. The image of Fabius pursued him, and his awful voice still rang in his ears, uttering those portentous words,—"I deserted the only Saviour, and now I am lost for ever!"

"Is it thus indeed?" murmured Horatius to himself; "Is this the truth, forced from the dying lips of one who once followed the Nazarene, and then forsook his faith. If Fabius spoke truly, then what is my own condition? But no, his case is not mine; I never professed allegiance to the crucified Jew,—and I never will."

Horatius returned to the dwelling of his daughter, and communicated to its inmates the death of Fabius by his own hand; but he did not detail the frightful particulars, or repeat the dreadful words of the suicide.

He found Vivia and her brother earnestly occupied in devising plans for the removal of the body of Marcus from the field of blood, in order to its Christian burial in some retired spot in the suburbs. On this point the bereaved widow was keenly sensitive; and the thought

of her husband's beloved form being left, as was usual in such cases, to be torn by the beasts and birds of prey, seemed to rouse her to a degree of insupportable agony, which she had not evinced before. She besought her father to return to the Proconsul, and solicit his permission for the body to be restored to her. But Horatius felt confident that such a request would now be peremptorily refused, and would only have the effect of causing a more vigilant watch to be kept at the place of execution; and Vivia abandoned this scheme, and resolved to attempt to gain her object by repairing after sunset to the field, attended by such of her friends as would consent to run the risk of assisting her.

Secundulus and Claudius Saturninus readily promised their aid, when Julius represented to them the earnestness of his sister's desire; and, as she insisted on accompanying the party herself, and following her beloved to his earthly resting place, it was agreed that her two Christian friends should meet her at the outskirts of the city, whither she should repair with her brother and Revocatus, as soon as the shades of evening were sufficiently deep to

favour their enterprise. They would, however, have had little chance of effecting their purpose, had it not occurred to Vivia to solicit the co-operation of her faithful, though unbelieving, friend, Septimius. Julius sought him out, and readily obtained his promise so to dispose the patrol, which was committed to his direction, as that, at a certain hour, Vivia and her friends might be sure of their being at a distance from the spot where the fatal block had been placed.

Evening came; and, with more of nervous agitation than Vivia had manifested since the sufferings of Marcus had terminated, she bade farewell to her parents, and left her house on her pious, but somewhat perilous enterprize. In vain Portia sought to dissuade her from it. She was not to be moved, for she felt that she was performing a sacred duty,—the last it would be in her power to pay, to him whom she had loved so well. As she passed through the porch into the street, she was joined by Felicitas, who had not asked permission to attend her, fearing that Vivia might forbid her exposing herself to needless danger. But she could not now reject the

kind support of her friend, and they proceeded, with Julius and Revocatus, to the place of meeting.

Their associates were ready; and well provided with everything necessary for the full accomplishment of their object. A faint and partial moonlight guided them to the spot they desired to reach; and they believed themselves unobserved; for the footsteps of the patrol were heard at a considerable distance, and no other sound broke the stillness of night.

Vivia's steps trembled as she approached the spot where her husband's headless body lay exposed; but she knelt down silently beside it, and remained motionless until her companions had laid it in a large cloak, with the dissevered head, and prepared to lift it from the ground. No time was to be lost, for ere long the patrol would return to the spot, and their task would be rudely interrupted. So Vivia cast a long, sad look at the loved features, that even then wore an expression of manly beauty and holy calmness, as the pale beams of the waning moon fell upon them; and then she folded the cloak

over all that could decay of the object of her love; and, rising up, she followed her friends, who rapidly led the way from the field.

They reached a thick grove of tamarisk trees; and there they found the Presbyter, Numidicus, waiting to perform the burial service, according to the simple form then in use in the Christian Church. The psalm usually sung at the grave was, on this occasion, omitted; but the Presbyter pronounced a short eulogium on the faith and courage of the departed brother, and recited a portion of the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians; which, even in these early days, was generally used in the funeral service. Then all knelt round the grave, which had been hastily prepared by Vivia's friends during the day; and the body being lowered into it, the service concluded with a solemn and affecting prayer. Nor was the usual token of a martyr's grave forgotten. Before the earth was thown in, Felicitas cast on the corpse a handful of evergreens,—the emblems of immortality, and of the hope entertained by the survivors of a happy re-union.

The grave was quickly filled up with earth, and everything restored, as far as possible, to its original appearance; and, while this was being completed, Julius led the Presbyter away, and intreated him to hasten home, lest he should be seen with Vivia, and thus expose both to danger. She stood with Felicitas by the grave, and awaited her brother's return, when the little company of Christian mourners intended to disperse, and enter the city in smaller groups, and by different roads.

But their design was interrupted. Julius and Numidicus had not long disappeared among the trees, when the party by the grave heard a rustling sound among the surrounding underwood; and several dark forms presented themselves on every side, and sternly required them to deliver themselves up to the arm of the law, as convicted Christians, and as having been guilty of carrying off the body of a criminal, on which justice had not fully been accomplished. Resistance would have been vain, and flight was impossible. Vivia and her four remaining companions were seized, and bound, and dragged away in a direction

contrary to that in which Julius and the Presbyter had gone. For this they felt grateful; as it led to a hope that their friends would escape detection. Their captors were aware that a Christian minister had been present at the funeral, for, as they lay concealed behind the thick bushes, they had heard the service performed; and they demanded of the prisoners where he was. No reply could, however, be obtained, and their anger increased; and with it, the violence with which they dragged their captives forward.

Julius returned towards the place where he had left his sister and her friends, in time to perceive that they were in the hands of enemies. His first impulse was to rush forward, and declare himself as one of the Christian party; but a moments' reflection convinced him that such a course would not only endanger his own life, without benefitting his companions, but would also preclude him from the possibility of conveying the news of their capture to their family and friends. He therefore waited until they were all out of sight, and then hurried home to acquaint his parents with the distressing fact. Bitterly did Portia and Hora-

tius regret that they had not used stronger means to prevent Vivia from exposing herself to this danger. But regrets were useless now: and Horatius resolved to make a vigorous effort to rescue his child from impending destruction. He feared, from past experience, that the influence he had once possessed with the Proconsul no longer existed; and he entertained very slight hopes of moving him to any act of mercy by his arguments or persuasions. But he knew that cupidity was one of his master passions, and on the gratification of that passion he relied for the preservation of his daughter. Would the love of wealth prevail over the love of vengeance?

Early in the morning he sought the Proconsul, whose stern and moody aspect gave but little encouragement to his hopes. To all his entreaties Saturninus coldly replied that the edict of the Emperor must be complied with; and he was resolved that the laws should no longer be despised and set at nought within the limits of his government. Horatius then tried the effect of bribery; but in this attempt he was equally unsuccessful. Saturninus was not to be moved, although Horatius offered him the

price of the whole of his ample possessions. The fact was that the rapacious governor knew well that both Secundulus, and Claudius Saturninus were young men of large property, the whole of which would be confiscated, and pass into his hands if they were executed: and he did not think it expedient to make an exception in favour of Vivia, even if he had felt inclined to do so. Such, however, was far from being the case. Fabius, her father-in-law, had escaped the cruel fate he had designed for him, by voluntary destruction; and his unsatisfied malignant feelings yearned to exercise themselves on this remaining member of his family. He had likewise received several reports during the last few days, that convinced him that the obnoxious doctrines of Christianity were rapidly gaining converts in the city; and an unusual number of suspected disciples of Christ had been apprehended, and cast into the dungeons of the prison to await their trial. He therefore resolved to institute a solemn investigation into the guilt of all the prisoners; and to make a fearful example of those who were convicted of worshipping the despised Nazarene. The heathen population of Carthage had long been

denied the welcome spectacle of Christians in deadly conflict with wild beasts in the public amphitheatre: and Saturninus had made up his mind to gratify their fiendish taste once more; and thus increase his own popularity, while, at the same time he hoped to strike terror and dismay into the whole Christian community.

Such were his motives for rejecting every offer, however tempting, that Horatius could make to him; and the aged and distressed father left his presence in despair. It was common for heathen magistrates to permit the friends and relatives of their Christian prisoners to visit them, in the hope that their arguments, and their grief, might induce the converts to recant. Such, in too many instances, was the sad effect of these interviews; and these recantations were always hailed with joy and triumph by the pagans, and rewarded with honour, and applause, and wealth. No wonder, therefore, that the fear of agony, and death; the hope of life, and earthly happiness; and the sight of the anguish of those who were dearest to them, should sometimes overcome a weak and wavering faith, and bring shame on the

cause of Christ, and contempt on his false disciples.

Horatius repaired from the costly apartment of the Proconsul, to the wretched dungeon in which his daughter and all her companions were confined; and which was already occupied by a large number of prisoners of every rank and age, who were suspected of the same crime with themselves.

The dark, and ill-ventilated cell was oppressive and gloomy to the greatest degree: and the heart of Horatius was wrung with anguish and shame at the idea of his beloved child being thus subjected to misery and privation, and mingled with prisoners of the lowest class of life. He eagerly sought her out among the crowd; and found her seated with Felicitas on a rude bench, and calmly conversing with her other companions on the probable nature of their coming fate. The sight of her venerable father, and his words of passionate grief, affected her powerfully; but she soon regained her composure, and entreated him to be comforted, as the prospect of death was, to her, the prospect of happiness. The thought of her infant was the only thing that seemed to trouble

her: and she assured Horatius that if he could obtain her removal to a more airy cell, and permission for her child to share her captivity, she should have nothing left to desire.

This small favour her father resolved, if possible, to purchase for her; and ere many hours had elapsed, he procured her removal, and that of Felicitas, to a private and more cheerful cell, to which also he conveyed her infant, with the welcome assurance, that the child should not be taken from her until she either purchased her freedom by recantation, or atoned for her obduracy by death. Horatius had witnessed his daughter's undaunted firmness on a former occasion, and therefore he had but little hope of her adopting the former alternative. Still he did not utterly despair; and all that remonstrance, entreaty, and parental authority, could accomplish, he was determined to attempt.

The examination of Vivia and her companions did not take place immediately; for Saturninus deferred bringing them before his tribunal, until he had collected all the evidence that he deemed necessary fully to convict the

whole party. This occupied several days; and during that time Vivia and her faithful friend, Felicitas, were permitted to remain undisturbed; and with perfect calmness they looked forward to what they expected as their inevitable fate. Vivia occupied herself greatly in the care of her infant, and the sweet serenity of her countenance was in full accordance with her own declaration, that she was "as happy in the walls of her prison, as if it had been a palace*." Felicitas emulated her faith and her composure; but the anxiety she felt concerning her husband, who was left in the common prison, often marred her peace of mind; and her only earthly consolation consisted in the messages of comfort and encouragement which he continually sent to her, through their mutual friends and visitors, the Presbyter and the Deacons of the Church.

The greatest source of disquietude to Vivia during her period of imprisonment was the passionate grief of her father. Daily he came to her cell; and, when he found persuasion useless, he sometimes gave way to reproach

* Fleury.

and invective, and accused his daughter of having caused all the misery which had befallen herself and her connexions. Then he would again melt into tears, and beseech her to have pity on her parents and her infant son. Once he brought Portia with him, hoping that she would join her solicitations to his. But the Christian mother only wept over her daughter's sad fate, and made no attempt to shake her resolution. From that time Horatius suffered her not to visit the prison, for he feared that she might betray herself, and he saw that her presence would not tend to promote his object.

Julius also was constant in his visits to his sister; and his conversation, and that of Numidicus, were the greatest joy and refreshment to Vivia's spirit, for they sought not to dissuade her from avowing her real faith. On the contrary, they encouraged both her and Felicitas to persevere unto the end, and held out to their view, the prospect of the crown of glory which they were so soon to inherit. Julius seemed even to covet the same fate, and lamented that he had been absent from his companions at the time of their apprehension. But Numidicus

strongly reproved this excited state of feeling, and exhorted him to be patient, and continue to bear the cross until it should be his Master's good pleasure to call him to wear the crown. Julius was silenced, but not convinced. The calamities that had fallen upon his house had broken his spirit; and he felt that the death of Vivia would make the earth almost a blank to him. He would have died for Marcus, and now he desired to die with Vivia. What, he thought, had either he or his sister left on earth to make life a boon to them? The mind of Julius Satur was affected by the infirmities of his body; and he was partially blinded to the duty of every Christian, to be ready not only to die for his Master's sake, but also to live, and work, and suffer, and endure, in his Master's service. Vivia regretted his state of mind, for she feared it would lead him to some act of imprudence which would cause his own destruction, and deprive his parents of the only child who was now left to comfort them. But she deeply sympathized in his feelings; for she regarded death as the greatest blessing that could be accorded to her; and as the time drew nearer, her courage and her

spirits rose. Most truly her feelings and those of her brother, were those of a modern poet*.

O land! O land!
For all the broken-hearted
The mildest herald by our fate allotted,
Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand,
To lead us with a gentle hand,
Into the land of the great departed,—
Into the silent land!

* Salis.

CHAPTER XII.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.—*Romans* viii. 35-37.

There a brave, holy band
Sank down to rest.
They died at duty's call,
And they are blest.

Not on a battle-field
These heroes fell.
No shouts of victory
Sounded their knell.

More glorious such who die:—
Greater their name,
Than those whose victory
Trumpets proclaim!—C. WALCOT.

ON the morning appointed for the public examination of the prisoners, Vivia and Felicitas were again conducted to the loathsome common prison, in order that all might be led together to the tribunal of the Proconsul.

On leaving the private cell, Vivia took leave

of her infant, whom she never again expected to behold on earth. She delivered him into the arms of Lucretia; who, now bowed down with grief, waited to receive her charge, and to convey him to Portia, to whose care and love Vivia desired her to commit him, until he could be conveyed, with little Camillus, to Armenia, and placed under the guardianship of Octavius and Marcella. She then courageously joined her fellow-prisoners, and witnessed with a strange smile the meeting of Felicitas and Revocatus. She thought with transport how soon she and her beloved husband would be re-united, never to be parted again.

An uproar outside the prison gates announced the arrival of the military guard to conduct the prisoners to trial; and as Vivia turned towards the door of the cell, to view the entrance of these heathen ruffians, with cords and fetters to bind their unresisting victims, her eyes met those of Julius. His limbs were free; and he sprang forward with an expression of joy and exultation that surprised his sister, until he exclaimed,—

"My Vivia, death will not divide us. I am permitted to share your triumph, and to join

my dying testimony to the power and faithfulness of our Redeemer with your's. Praise the Lord with me for his goodness!"

Vivia looked at her brother; and the enthusiasm that lighted up his expressive countenance proved to her, even more than his words, how great a privilege he felt it to be counted worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord. For his sake she rejoiced that he was so early to enter into his rest, and obtain the crown of martyrdom which he had ever coveted. But she grieved for her parents, who would now be bereaved of all their children; and she gently reproached her brother for seeming negligent of them, while he was thus absorbed in his own heavenly prospects. Julius had indeed made a voluntary confession to the chief magistrate that he still persisted in the faith and practice of the Nazarene. He had declared that he had assisted in carrying off the body of Marcus, and giving it Christian burial. And he had surrendered himself into the hands of the government, to be dealt with according to the Imperial edict, and to share the fate of his companions, in whose crime he had fully participated. Nor had Saturninus attempted to

dissuade him from thus voluntarily rushing into destruction. His feelings were at this time highly excited against the Christians; and the boldness of Julius in thus professing his adherence to the obnoxious doctrines which had once before so nearly proved fatal to him, exasperated him still further. He instantly ordered him to be conveyed to the prison, and added to the company of Christians whose doom was that day to be pronounced.

Strange as the conduct of Julius may appear, it is nevertheless true that it was the conduct pursued by many of the disciples of Christ in the early ages of persecution*. Its lawfulness may be questioned; but the heroic devotion that prompted it must call forth the admiration of every Christian spirit.

In reply to the inquiries and remonstrances of Vivia, Julius informed her that before he had made the acknowledgment which had given him a title to martyrdom, he had made every necessary arrangement for the removal of their parents, in company with Numidicus and the

* Fleury informs us that the brother of Vivia Perpetua did thus surrender himself to share her fate and that of her companions.

orphan children, to Armenia. To these arrangements he had obtained their consent, and they were still under the impression that he designed to accompany them, and to seek, in that distant and barbarous land, a temporary security from the active persecution that was raging against his Christian brethren. The acquiescence of Horatius to this voluntary exile was given in the hope of thus removing his wife from the danger of any discovery of her change of religion; and preserving her and his youngest son from the sad fate which had befallen the rest of his family.

But little time was afforded to the brother and sister for conversation. They were bound in their turn, and led forth with the rest of the prisoners to the tribunal of the Proconsul, who sat ready to receive them, surrounded by his official attendants; while the great hall was thronged by a vast concourse of spectators.

The prisoners were ranged before the judgment-seat; and, one by one, were subjected to the usual inquiries, and invited to save their lives by performing an act of sacrifice to the gods. When it came to Vivia's turn, she was about freely to confess that she was a Christian,

when an extraordinary bustle and confusion took place in the part of the hall nearest to the entrance. She looked round; and what were her sensations at beholding her aged father forcing his way through the crowd, and holding up her little infant in his trembling arms, resolved, in this affecting manner, to make one last appeal to her filial and maternal feelings, and attempt to avert what he deemed not only a heavy calamity, but also a deep degradation to his noble name.

The crowd gave way, and he approached his daughter, and besought her even now to have compassion on her child, who, he said, could not survive her; and on her parents, whose grey hairs she would otherwise bring down with sorrow and shame to the grave. Saturninus even made a show of pity, and condescended to counsel her to think upon her father and her child, and allow herself to sacrifice. But she calmly rejected every invitation and entreaty, and contented herself with the brief reply that she was a Christian, and would die a Christian. Horatius was then ordered to withdraw; but he continued to linger, and to interrupt the proceedings by his grief and his

supplications. Perceiving this, one of the lictors approached him, and impatiently struck him a heavy blow with his rod, which pierced the soul of Vivia, and brought tears to her eyes, which her own fate had failed to excite.*

The old man left the hall, overwhelmed with indignation and sorrow; and one more pang was added to the anguish of his bleeding heart as he passed through the opening crowd, and his eyes were met by those of his son Julius, who stood bound at the further end of the line of prisoners. He could not approach him; and that glance told him the whole story of his accumulated woes. He hurried into the street, and reached his house scarcely able to support his frame, or to tell to Portia the sad results of his visit to the judgment hall.

Among the band of Christians who stood before the heathen Governor, not one was found to deny their Lord; and on all he pronounced the sentence of capital punishment, varying the nature of the death to which he doomed them according to the degree of their guilt in his estimation, or of the malignity of feeling to which he had, by different circum-

* Fleury.

stances, been excited against them. Vivia Perpetua, with Felicitas, and their male companions, were condemned to be exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre; and they were once more conducted to prison to await the execution of this fearful sentence, which was postponed for two days. Those days were spent by the prisoners in prayer, and mutual exhortation and encouragement; and, not unfrequently, the hymn of praise was heard by their jailors, resounding from the cell in the full chorus of their united voices.

Through the indulgence of the guard, who were somewhat touched by their cheerful piety and resignation, their Christian friends were permitted to join them on the evening previous to their execution, and to celebrate with them the love-feast, in which the primitive believers delighted to join*. Many of their pagan friends and fellow-citizens were also present as spectators of the solemn and affecting scene; and it is recorded that it was the means, together with the exhortations that accompanied it, of touching the hearts of several, and leading them to embrace the

* Jamieson's Primitive Christianity.

doctrines for which these holy confessors were about to die. On the strangers being desired to take leave, Julius Satur addressed them, and desired them carefully to mark the countenances of the Christian prisoners, that they might be the better able to recognize them on the following day, and to observe with what calm tranquillity, and holy hope, they would be enabled to meet the last enemy; not in their own strength, but in the strength of Him to whom they had given their hearts, and who would never desert them in their hour of trial.

At the time appointed for the exhibition of the barbarous shows on the following day, the victims were led out; and it was remarked that they all walked with a firm step, "as if they were going to a marriage-feast, instead of a mortal conflict! At the gate of the amphitheatre an occurrence which they had not foreseen, still further aroused all their Christian energies, and Christian resolution. It was customary for all who attended these dreadful combats to be adorned with some of the symbols of idolatry. The men wore a red mantle, which was the habit of the priests of Saturn;

and the women a little fillet bound round their heads, by which the priestesses of Ceres were known: and when the martyrs reached the entrance of the fatal arena, several persons advanced towards them, and attempted to invest them with these pagan symbols. But with one voice they protested against the odious and idolatrous practice, complaining eagerly of the manifest injustice of forcing on them those very usages, for the refusal to comply with which, they were now going to lay down their lives. The pagans persisted, and were about to have recourse to violence, when the tribune on guard approached, and instantly commanded them to desist; and gave permission to the Christians to pass on undefiled by the outward garb of idolatry. It was Septimius who performed this last act of kindness towards the widow of his friend, and her companions. They were then led into the amphitheatre, singing hymns; and Julius, ever eager and enthusiastic, called on the Magistrates and the people to remember that they all died in the faith of that Saviour, "whom, not having seen, they loved; and in whom, though as yet they saw him not, they rejoiced with joy

unspeakable, and full of glory;" and he warned them that all present would have to give account, at a Divine tribunal, of the part which they took in that day's transaction.

The beasts were then let loose; and they rushed fiercely from their cages to meet their prey, uttering deep and savage growls. It seemed that the high courage, and undaunted bearing of the noble Vivia Perpetua and her friend, Felicitas, had provoked the peculiar wrath of the Proconsul; for he had the unexampled cruelty to order them to be kept apart, in a place where the beasts could not reach them, and where their sufferings were increased, and their feelings harrowed, by witnessing the sickening spectacle of all their male companions being led out, and successively torn and mangled by the ferocious lions, leopards, and bears. But even this scene did not greatly move them; and Felicitas made a parting sign to her expiring husband, and pointed to heaven as the place of their speedy re-union.

All their companions lay bleeding corpses; and their own turn being at last come, they were led into a small inclosure in the midst of

the amphitheatre, and exposed to the attacks of a wild boar. The infuriated beast rushed first at Vivia; and, throwing her violently to the ground, trampled her under his feet; and then assailing Felicitas, tore her furiously with his tusks, and left her faint and bleeding on the ground. Meanwhile Vivia had risen to her feet, and carefully composed her torn and disordered garments; and then, seeing the condition of her friend, she took her by the hand, and gently assisted her to rise. Surely it was of the Lord's compassion, which never fails, that the savage boar made no further attack upon these heroic women. He withdrew to the side of the lists, leaving them tenderly supporting each other, and awaiting their fate. The spectators, cruel as they were, were moved by the touching scene, and loudly called on Saturninus to give orders for their being dispatched with the sword. He consented, and, as the executioners approached, they gave each other the affectionate kiss of peace, and meekly presented themselves to the fatal stroke.

Felicitas expired by a single blow; but Vivia, falling into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, received several severe wounds in

vain. Still this truly heroic woman preserved her Christian fortitude, and Christian dignity, to the last. She drew her robe more closely round her tall and graceful form, and was seen to give the executioner directions how to perform his task, so as to put a more speedy end to her sufferings. He obeyed her. The sword fell again: and the sorrows of Vivia Perpetua were ended, and eternal joy begun*.

* Sickening it is to a feeling heart to realize the fact that such appalling scenes as are described above, were ever enacted upon the face of the earth. Yet we know from undoubted authority that such was the case; and that these sad details are no less true than horrible. Nor is this instance a solitary one. No, the same cruel and revolting spectacles were exhibited in every part of the Roman dominions in the fiery times of persecution: and from those days "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," have ceased not to "cry with a loud voice; How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

May the Lord avert from us the trials and sufferings which were the portion of our ancestors in the faith: or grant to us the like faith and love, that we may endure them as they did!

CHAPTER XIII.

One family, we dwell with Him;
  One church, above, beneath:
Though now divided by the stream,—
  The narrow stream of death.

One army of the living God,
  To His command we bow.
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
  And part are crossing now.

Happy the souls released,
  And safely landed there.
Some of the shining number once we knew,
  And travelled with them here.—ANON.

THE evening sun was sinking towards the western range of mountains that bounds the wide and level plain through which flows the ancient Araxes; and the lofty, and snow-covered summits of Mount Ararat were richly tinged by his parting beams. Scattered over the plain were several groups of dark tents, or of still ruder huts, in which dwelt the inhabitants of that wild and pastoral district; whilst

all around were the countless flocks and herds, which formed the sole possessions, and almost the sole subsistence, of the wandering and uncultivated people.

Near the banks of the river was one dwelling, which, although as rude in its construction as the rest, yet wore an aspect of comfort and civilization that was not to be seen in any of the others. Not many months had elapsed since its present inhabitants had taken up their abode in that hut; and already its walls were adorned with creeping plants, and a small enclosure that surrounded it, shewed traces of care and cultivation. It was a lovely spot by nature, and needed not the additions of art to make it highly attractive. The humble dwelling stood on a verdant bank that sloped gently down to the broad and shining river, the broken edges of which were fringed with trees and flowering shrubs, and enlivened by groups of cattle and flocks of water birds. The entrance to the cottage commanded a magnificent view of Mount Ararat, as it rose abruptly from the plain, and towered proudly above the clouds, over which its glittering peaks were seen in sharp relief against the deep blue sky.

Within the rustic porch sat two persons, whose appearance was but little in unison with the wildness of the scene, or with the savage and uncouth figures of some shepherds who were driving their flocks to water at no great distance from the hut. Both these individuals were young; and in their air and manner was something that bespoke them to be of a rank of life far superior to their present apparent condition, although their dress was simple and unornamented. On the countenances of each were the traces of sorrow and anxiety strongly depicted; and yet there was a calmness,—a dignity of expression, that told of sorrow endured with resignation, and trials overcome by faith.

It was evident that they had been studying a volume which lay open on the knee of the young man; but now they were silent, and the eyes of both were fixed thoughtfully on the setting sun; and the minds of both were carried sadly back to the land from whence they came:—the land on which the sun would shine after it had sunk behind their western horizon of mountains.

"Octavius," said his female companion,

"several months have now passed since our exile began, and still no tidings have reached us of my father, and our dear afflicted Vivia. My heart sinks when I reflect on all that your sister must have endured since the sad day that we parted with her at Carthage, and left her as a lamb in the midst of wolves. I much fear that her natural strength must have failed after all the calls on her exertion and her fortitude were over. Dear Vivia!" she added; and tears of sympathy fell from her eyes, as she thought of the sufferings of her friend: "Dear Vivia, she has been sorely tried, 'even as gold is tried in the fire;' and she has been made 'meet for the Master's use.'"

How little Marcella knew that while she thus expressed her sympathy and admiration for her beloved friend, the emancipated spirit of that friend was rejoicing in her Saviour's presence; far removed from all fear of suffering, and perfectly cleansed from every stain of sin, and every remnant of natural corruption!

Octavius was about to reply; and to express his hope that ere long Numidicus would find

means to join them in their peaceful retreat, and bring Vivia and the children with him; when Marcella exclaimed,

"Look, Octavius, across the plain. I see a large company of travellers emerging from the shadow of the mountains. They must have come by the road which we travelled from Berea; and are now entering the plain by the narrow ravine. Can they come from Carthage? Can our dear friends be among them? My heart tells me that it is so; and I must go forth to meet them. I would that I knew our Vivia was there!"

Octavius distinctly saw the approaching group; and, as they advanced, he could distinguish the arms of Roman soldiers glittering in the last rays of the sun. His own hopes were excited in the same manner as those of Marcella; amd he readily consented to accompany her in the direction she desired. They walked rapidly across the level, grassy plain; and as they drew near to the travellers, Marcella's heart beat high, for she saw two female figures, mounted on mules, and in the arms of one of them she descried an infant.

"It is Vivia!" she cried joyfully; and sprang forward to welcome her friend. What was her surprise, on reaching the foremost of the riders, to perceive that it was Portia who carried the child; and, glancing hastily at her companion, she recognized Lucretia, behind whom little Camillus was placed, She felt that all her forebodings concerning her friend were indeed true, and she did not question Portia in words; she only looked sadly and inquiringly into her gentle and venerable countenance, and the look was understood.

"She is not here. She is in Heaven, with Marcus," said Portia. "Yet weep not, Marcella;—weep not for her. Her trials have been great indeed; but they are over. Weep for those who survive her."

Tears flowed down the mother's cheeks, and she stooped forward to embrace Marcella: and as she did so, she placed in her arms the precious legacy that Vivia had bequeathed to her. Marcella clasped the smiling infant to her breast, and silently turning, she walked by the side of her mother-in-law towards her own home in the wilderness, overwhelmed by her sad feelings and reflections. She forbore to ask any

further questions. She did not even trust herself to seek out her father, who was at some distance in the rear, following on foot with Horatius, and accompanied by several Roman guards whom they had obtained from the governor of Berea, and a few attendants, bearing packages on their backs.

When all the party had reached the dwelling of Octavius, a sad and yet a joyful meeting took place between Numidicus and his daughter; and all the mournful events that had occurred at Carthage since her departure, were made known to her. Could she regret that Vivia was now at rest? O no! She rejoiced with much thankfulness; and strove to check her selfish tears, that started at the detail of the sufferings and the heroism of her sainted friend and sister.

Horatius brought a considerable portion of his wealth with him: and he soon found means to obtain permission from the Roman governor of the province to build a commodious dwelling near the spot already occupied by his son, and to cultivate the adjoining land.

Rufus, who had accompanied him in this voluntary banishment, and a few other of his

dependants, were all that remained of his former princely establishment: but safety was what he sought; and here he found it. Nor was it only safety for his Christian wife that he now desired to find; neither was it on her account alone that he now wished to withdraw for a time from the vigilance and the suspicions of the Pagan Government. Convictions, which he had long resisted, had proved at length too powerful for his attachment to his idols; and Horatius was a Christian at heart from the moment that he was driven violently from the hall of judgment, after hearing the final confession of his daughter. Unity of feeling was thus established at last among this long divided family; and but for the sad recollections that could not be banished, they were happier far in that wilderness than they had ever been in their sumptuous dwelling at Carthage.

Even Lucretia,—the bigotted Lucretia,—confessed the power of those doctrines for which her much-loved mistress had dared to die; and she added one more to the countless examples of the truth of the observation, that "the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Gospel:" and that the more abundantly it was shed on

the earth by the enemies of the truth, so much "the more mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" over the kingdom of Satan. Thus has it ever been; and thus will it ever be; for Christ has declared that the "gates of hell shall never prevail against" His Church*.

* It is recorded that the cruel Saturninus lost his sight soon after the execution of the Martyrs of Carthage, and died a miserable death.

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